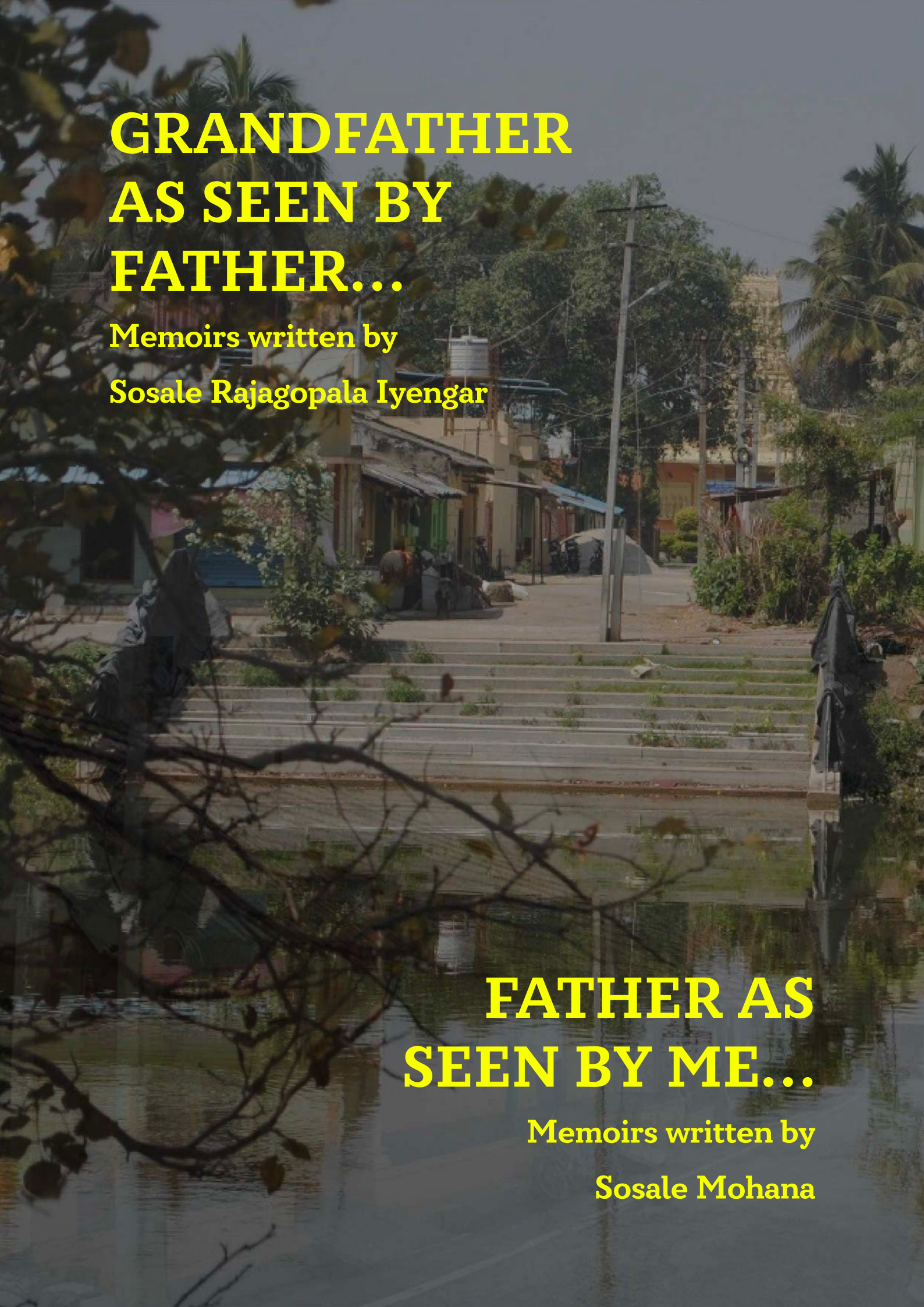

GRANDFATHER AS SEEN BY FATHER...

Memoirs written by

Sosale Rajagopala Iyengar

FATHER AS SEEN BY ME...

Memoirs written by

Sosale Mohana

Cover picture is that of SKP Agrahara, Sosale as viewed from the kola(man-made open water pond)
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PREFACE

While trying to come to terms with a tragedy in my family, I was thinking back on my father's role in moulding me to face setbacks in life.

I realised that in addition to his abundant love for me, his personality as a great teacher, his ideals and values influenced not only me but also the students who were taught by him.

I then decided to recall, record and share his life story as I knew it. In my narration, I have tried to portray my father's personality through anecdotes and memories I observed, heard from others or experienced myself. Any errors or omissions in the narration are due entirely to faults in my memory.

I am very grateful to Padma Vibhushan Dr. N R Narayana Murthy for sharing some of his memories as my father's student and also for agreeing to write a preface for my writing of my father's story.

I wrote my father's story in English in 2025. Back in 1966, my father wrote his father Shri Sosale Rangappa's story in Kannada. It is a testimony to the genius prof. Dr. Krishnamurthy Chandar, a renowned scholar of English, a writer and a literary figure of repute that he has translated my book from English to Kannada and has also translated my father's book from Kannada to English. It is my good fortune that Dr Krishnamurthy Chandar is my childhood friend and I am very grateful to him for his support, encouragement and help in my efforts to write and publish the real life stories of two great personalities from our family; my father and grandfather.

I would like to acknowledge and appreciate the hard work, support and assistance given by my friend Ravish Begari without whose help this book about my father and the book about my grandfather would never have been published. My heartfelt thanks to him.

It is very fitting that Kum. Tejaswini Nagesh, the eldest great granddaughter of Sri Sosale Rajagopala Iyengar, compiled, edited and published the English version of both the books as a single digital downloadable pdf edition. I am very grateful to Tejaswini for all her hardwork, interest and enthusiasm in getting her ancestors' story published.

Sosale Mohana
Bengaluru
April 2026

SOSALE RANGAPPA

Original story in Kannada written by
Sosale Rajagopala Iyengar

Translated into English by
Prof. Dr. Krishnamurthy Chandar

PART 1

The Lineage of Tirumale Tatacharya

Amongst those saints who advocated the path of devotion. Bhakti for self-realisation and to realise God, Srimad Alwar Ramanjua Acharya is in the forefront. The path he preached, the faith that he propagated is popularly known as Shrivaishnava Faith. This is one of the branches in the tree of many ancient faiths of India.

Tirumale Tatacharya belongs to a distinguished lineage of this faith. This lineage had achieved distinction and recognition in all the Srivaishnava pilgrim centres such as Tirupati, Kanchi, Srirangam, Yadugiri (Melkote) among many others.

There are interesting tales associated with this curious name. Tata- which literally means “grandfather!”; It is believed that the presiding deity of Tirupati, Lord Srinivasa himself used to address the person from whom this lineage took birth as “Tata”! And that is how it got its name. This family has had honour and recognition bestowed upon them from the times of one of the greatest kings of the Vijayanagar Dynasty Sri Krishnadeva Raya (1509-1529); The family of Tatacharya enjoyed high prestige in the Tirupati temple even before the Vijayanagar empire. This family lineage branched into different lines and settled down in various parts of the present-day Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Telugu speaking areas of South India. One such branch of this family settled down in a Town called Kalale near Nanjangudu (not far from Mysuru) and gradually earned the honours bestowed upon them from the Mysore Royal family. This was the time of the rule of Mummadi Krsihnaraja Wodeyar. Families belonging to this line settled in the Towns of Sosale and Srirangarajapuram, thanks to the munificence of the royal family of Mysore. Our father whose life story I am going to record here belonged to the Tirumale Tatacharya family.

Srinivasa Rangacharya's birth and childhood

As per the Christian calendar, my father was born in the year 1866 CE. According to Hindu almanac, he was born in the year 1789 of the Shalivahana system of calendars. The year zero of this system corresponds to 78CE. He was born in the year called Prabhava: the first of the continuous cycle of 60 years in the Hindu calendar. He was born in the first month of this year called Chaitra.

Based on this information, we can surmise that he was born somewhere between 14th April-13th May of the year 1866 CE to Srinivasa Tatacharya and Yadugiramma couple. He was named Srinivasa Rangacharya- He was the eldest Son. Gopalacharya was his brother and he had two sisters – Rajalakshamma and Lakshamma.

Our family lived in a small Town called Srirangaraja Pura near Thirumakoodalu Narasipura which is situated about thirty kilometres from the Royal city of Mysore. This family was an orthodox traditional Srivaishnava family. As per the custom prevailing in those days, both brothers had their initial training in the Vedas and sacred texts.They were fortunate enough to be tutored by Ghanapati Veera Raghava Acharya. Both the brothers became well versed in the sacred texts and Kannada heritage too. Though the family was poor, there was no dearth of encouragement for scholarly activities and both the brothers excelled in traditional knowledge.

Another name for the family

"Dodda Pada" literally meaning "big foot" was another name by which this family is known. It is believed that the name was given to our family which had settled down in the Town

Kalale, by the then maharaja of Mysore province, “Mummadi Krishna Raja Wodeyar” (1799-1868). This title “Dodda pada” was befitting in two ways. First, by their behaviour, attitude and words, this family had earned the love and goodwill of the people and the second literally so, as the members of this family boasted of a well-proportioned body structure boosted by a pair of noticeably large feet; the name “Dodda pada” bestowed upon them by the family of the Mysore Royal dynasty.

Though both brothers, the elder Srinivas Rangacharya and the younger Gopalacharya were of a solid build, the elder was dark in complexion and the younger much fairer in comparison. The brothers were inseparable and studied the ancient scriptures under the same Guru. However, the younger brother Gopalacharya did not take much to building his physical prowess as the elder one Srinivasa Rangacharya!

Daily routine of Srinivasa Rangacharya

Srinivasa Rangacharya was a mountain of a man, towering over six feet 3 inches, with a matching body and phenomenal physical strength toughened by hours of swimming and body building. He was a fine wrestler too. He was adept at rowing and manoeuvring a boat or a coracle, however powerful the water current may be. Professional oarsmen who had witnessed his skills of rowing and manoeuvring in rivers would marvel at his skills and would hand over the oar to him whenever he went near the River for a boat trip. That a Brahmin youth excelled in a skill that demanded high dexterity and an in-depth knowledge of water currents- unpredictable as they are- made him a legend.

He could climb trees, however tall, very easily. His pace while he walked was unmatched; those who were with him had to run to keep pace with him. He was fond of moving from town to town on foot. It was rarely that he agreed to sit in a cart to travel.

He wore specially made slippers whose sole was about two inches thick, carried a long staff that reached to his face and always had two huge bags dangling from his shoulders. The traditional dhoti worn as per the south Indian style Kacche Veshti , wound round the waist and tucked down at the back after passing between the legs would barely reach his knees and assisted his long strides. The Srivaishnava symbol marked on his broad black forehead with the bottom curve of the white U sitting in the gap between the eye brows with a red vermillion I starting at the hollow of the U and running parallel to the vertical sides of the U was noticeable from a distance. He was very disciplined in his routine. He would wake up early in the morning when it was still dark and run to the pond, lake or river, close by for his morning ablutions before embarking on running, climbing a hillock and swimming. He continued with this even after the family moved to Mysore. Each early morning wake up call was marked by the palace bell or cannon on the hour. He would leave home and would run briskly to reach the steps leading up to the Chamundi hills. He would then climb the seven hundred steps to reach the statue of the bull Nandi. He would exercise in the open space in front of the statue, climbdown to the huge lake (Dodda Kere or big water tank; this tank is now dry and a huge open place. Until 1940's this tank which covers a huge area was always full with water) opposite the palace. He would then swim across from one bank to the opposite bank and return to the starting point of the swim, wash his clothes before heading home.

His early morning meal generally consisted of left over cooked rice from the previous night (generally preserved in water in an earthen pot) mixed with the left over spicy lentil soup (called rasam or saru) and served with a big dollop of

homemade butter. This would be followed by a curds mixed with the same rice and served with an accompaniment of pickles. And, whenever it was available, a huge jug of fresh milk.

Throughout his life, he was blessed with excellent health. He hardly ever went to any hospital for any kind of treatment except during his old age he had to be admitted for the removal of some growth in his eye. This certainly was not to his liking and he regretted it very much.

Employment as an accountant or a Karanika

The family was constantly plagued by financial worries. Poverty starved the family as it did most of the families at that time. However, the family enjoyed a brief period of prosperity for some years. This was a consequence of my aunt Rajalakshamma marrying into a wealthy land-owning family. She was married to Hundi Krishnamacharya, who was a prominent financier and money lender. He appointed Our father as a karanika; an accountant looking after the finances (A bursar or a finance manager in today's terms). The employment carried a generous salary and perks. This gave our father and his family some relief from financial troubles and to a certain extent, financial stability too!

Marriage

Child marriages were the norm then. My mother was ten years old and our father was about seventeen when the marriage was solemnised. A gap up to ten years was generally preferred in matrimonial alliances. Even here, there was an element of drama.

Our father's alliance was fixed with a girl from his town. All matters were agreed and the wedding preparations were in full swing- the marriage was fixed for the next day. The bride's parents came and dropped a bombshell. They refused to give their daughter's hand in marriage to Srinivasa Rangacharya- the reason- he was dark. To add to the problem of complexion, just that morning, the intended groom had hurt his face during his morning exercises at the Garadi (wrestling arena)and as a consequence gained a black eye that had distorted his face and had given it a weird look. No amount of discussion bore any positive outcome! The bride's party were adamant.

But this made my grandmother Yadugiramma all the more determined to perform her son's marriage at the same fixed auspicious moment (muhurtam) the next day.

She started in the night and walked to the town Sosale, reaching my maternal grandmother Lakshamma's house early in the morning. Lakshamma had two daughters. The elder one was Kalyanamma and the younger Alamelamma. Lakshamma was widowed when the younger daughter Alamelamma was an infant. As a result, she came to Sosale with her two little daughters to live with her parents. Her brothers were extremely fond of her and made her feel at home.

When Yadugeeramma reached Sosale, Lakshamma had spruced up the front yard as was the custom and was engaged in drawing the Rangoli in front of the house. What

followed was quite dramatic. “ Acchakka, (an affectionate form of Lakshamma), open your heart”, said Yadugeeramma and, as Lakshamma opened the free end of the saree, Yadugeeramma poured 100 coins of one rupee each, a huge sum then, in that. She asked her forcefully to give the hand of Kalyanamma to her son Srinivasa Rangacharya. The proposal was accepted and the wedding took place that day, at the anointed sacred moment. Thus, Kalyanamma became the wife of Srinivasa Rangacharya.

Kalyanamma’s entry into his household also ushered in prosperity! Srinivasa Rangacharya became a trustworthy relative of Hundi Krishnamacharya’s business empire. He was entrusted with transactions running into lakhs of rupees. He did it with honesty and responsibility for which he was rewarded. It soon became a prosperous household. It was said that money overflowed from pots and vessels in that house.

Our mother ushered in prosperity to all the members of the extended family too. The woman our father was engaged to be married to earlier was really unfortunate, for her husband passed away within a year or two of her marriage. A cruel incident can be recollected here.

Our father chanced upon her during a chariot-fair event some years later in the Town of Srirangarajapura. Widowhood had already descended upon her. Life had become bitter for her. Our father must have been moved seeing her present state. “Amma” he is reported to have said, “you would not have been in such an unfortunate circumstance had you only married me”! Poor lady, What could she do or how could she react? Who can ever transgress fate?

The family in Sosale Town

Our father's family settled down in the small town of Sosale! He was by this time, managing and was in charge of the financial banking transactions of his brother-in-law Hundi Krishnamacharya. (Hundi means a 'treasury')

With relatives in the whole Town, consequently the house was a Dharmashala! Festivities were the order of the day and the house was known for its hospitality. Lakshamma, our grandmother was in charge of running the home. Everyone looked up to her as the bountiful mother too! It was Our father's role to provide the resources to run the huge family. Our father loved to travel. He would keep walking from Town to Town, too- this was his passion. He was always accompanied by an entourage of ten or more people, always willing to accompany him , wherever he went- Kalkuni, Bannuru, Narsipura, Yelanduru, Komaranapura, Biligirirangana Hills, Karighatta and Mysore would be the centre of his visit, not to mention the festivities and temple chariot fairs in Karighatta, Melukote, Krishnapura, Narasipura, Biligiriranga Hills - which he would never miss, come what may.

Service to God

Karighatta is a small hillock near the temple of Srirangapattana, near Mysore. Srirangapattana was the capital of the erstwhile Mysore royalty before it was shifted to Mysore for security concerns. Lokapavani, a rivulet of the River Kaveri flows around this hillock and is a pleasing site. There are many temples on the apex of Karighatta but, the main temple has the deity Narayana, in the form of Lord

Srinivasa swami.

Our father was a great devotee of this Lord and took upon himself the task of carrying one hundred pots-full of water from the river below to the temple on top. This also helped him tide over the crisis of poverty later as the other devotees would honour him with some amount for his services. In much the same away, he would effortlessly carry huge amounts of water from the Kalyani (Holy Pond of water dedicated to a temple), to the temple in Biligiriranga Hills. Only those who have visited Biligiriranga Hills, about 40km away from Chamarajanagara in Karnatakacan truly appreciate the hardship involved- The path is slippery, steep and there is always the menace of leeches that cling to one's feet- much less the menace of wild elephants, bears and leopards there! It was the duty of our father and his relatives to decorate the chariot and temple-cars during the annual fair there. A prominent feature of these festivities was the tableau depicting the infant Prahallada, his father the Demon Hiranyakashipu who is killed by the Lord Vishnu in his incarnation as Narasimha.

Similarly, Our father would never miss the customary annual trip to Tirupati to visit the temple of the family deity Srinivasa there.

Sosale and Srimad Vyasaraja Yateendra Mutt

Sosale is a small historical Town situated on the banks of the River Kaveri very near the temple of T-Narasipura situated half an hour's drive from Mysore. History tells us that this Town was the house of Palegaars(local chieftains), owing allegiance to the Mysore Kings. The temple of Janardhana

Swamy in the Town is supposed to have been built by the Palegars who were reigning the region.

Sosale is also a holy Town where the sage Vyasaraja who was instrumental in effectively treating the great Krishnadeva Raya (of the Vijayanagara dynasty) is said to have settled down- establishing a holy centre. The disciples of Vyasaraja such as Purandaradasa, Kanakadasa, Vijayadasa and many others of this faith have made Sosale a sacred holy centre too.
Out father was a great devotee of this Vyasaraja Mutt (Though he was a confirmed SriVaishnava) and whenever he was in the Town, would never miss the daily worship there performed by the sage in charge and obtain his blessings without fail.

The pontiff then occupying the holy seat there, Srimadvidyanidhi Theertha was also very fond of Our father and would invite him for the festivities there. This pontiff appointed our elder brother who was a Sanskrit scholar as a Scholar-in-Residence to the Mutt and honoured him.

Broadminded personality

Our father was known for his large heart with not even an iota of caste superiority- a prevalent social system at his time. He was a true follower of traditions and faithfully performed all rituals. He was well read in all the sacred texts and customs. He was fond of all the people without any discrimination whatsoever. The Dalits of the Town were close to him.- as were most of the people from other communities. Saabji, Pinni, Racha and others whose names indicate they belong to the Dalit community used to work at home! Puttegowda of Topanakoppalu, Bannur Chamegowda, Kalkuni Malliah and Ameer Saab were his close friends. Ogasa, Oddagalla and Kallininga, the Dalit community leaders from the Town were pet disciples. Meals would be served to all these people at

home and everyone sat together and shared the meal. Before he set forth on any journey, which was a regular feature, Our father would get enough food cooked for all the men accompanying him. This entourage would sometime consist of eight to ten people; Mid-way near a river, stream or pond, they would stop and partake in the meal. Our father derived lot of happiness in such community-eating. The meal had to be tasty and perfectly cooked the previous night!

Fun with children

Our father considered all children divine! He would call out the name of the children going in the street and spend a lot of time with them. He would climb up coconut trees, bring down tender coconuts, open them up, serve the coconut water and the kernel mixed with jaggery to the children. He considered all children- whether belonging to his family or to others or from any community in the town-divine!

Rangappa: the beloved of the people

Our father was affectionately called “Rangappa” by all the townsfolk. In fact, he was well known in the surrounding Towns too as “Sosale Rangappa”. His adventurous spirit, helpful nature and selfless service had become legendary. Whoever was in need of help would approach Rangappa. He would take the initiative to mediate and solve any misunderstanding that would crop up between two parties- be it legal, partitioning of property, financial transactions and so on. His judgements were akin to that of any presiding judge in a court of law.

Rangappa: A man with great restraint despite great physical strength

Rangappa was bestowed with tremendous physical prowess but, he never misused or flaunted it. He always looked at peace with himself- he was known for his modesty. He had the same bearing, of contentment, whether he was poor or in the lap of luxury. He was always seeking ways and means of helping others. He would rarely get angry or lose his cool; On the rare occasions he did get angry, his stammer would come in the way of his expression. If he became agitated for some reason, he would walk away from home that was the strategy he adopted to keep his emotions under control.

Rangappa was, by nature a calm person and would rarely lose his temper but, if provoked, he could become wild! There were many who provoked him and paid a price on account of that. During the temple cart-fair at Karighatta, Rangappa took upon himself the holy task of carrying hundreds of pots full of water from the River Lokapavani to the temple on top of the hillock. On one such occasion, as he was entering the kitchen with the heavy water pot, another devotee requested for some water. Rangappa replied that as this water was meant for anointing of the main idol of the deity, he will return anon with water from another pot. But, the man would not listen to anything Rangappa said. He went on to berate our father for no reason. Our father lost his temper, put the heavy water-filled pot down and fell upon the other person who was also well built. Rangappa effortlessly lifted him up and put him down hard. A crowd gathered! All of them were familiar with Rangappa! All of them took the other person to task. He had a loss of face! He profusely apologised to our father!

The months of April, May and June are the summer months

which also usher the mango season. Many consider mango as the King of fruits and the state of Karnataka boasts of some fine varieties of mango. This brings us back to the adventures of Rangappa who was very fond of mangoes. He would have a slice of green raw mango smeared with a dash of salt and chillies along with his meals during this season. This gave him sublime satisfaction.

Once, while walking down the path from Kalkuni, he chanced upon a mango orchard. It was the mango season and bunches of mangoes on the trees held his attention. He did not hesitate. He picked up a stone, aimed at a bunch and threw it! The bunch fell down. Rangappa was collecting the mangoes in his uttariya (Upper body cloth) when the watchman, a Muslim in this case, came running to the spot. He proceeded to berate Rangappa with unparliamentary words. Rangappa was civil and polite- He tried to reason out saying that he was prepared to pay the cost of the mangoes. He was experiencing thirst which made him pluck some mangoes. But the watchman was in no mood for any reconciliatory talk. He pulled Our father's uttariya and was about to hit him. Rangappa became furious and with his left fist, proceeded to land a jab on the watchman. Our father was, incidentally, left-handed. The watchman screamed, ran for help to the Town and brought back a crowd of his men armed with poles and sticks- But the moment they saw Rangappa, they were taken aback as all of them were well known to him too! They advised the watchman instead and made him ask his forgiveness!

Rangappa's wrestling prowess.

Rangappa was an expert wrestler. He had started a private wrestling Gymnasium in Sosale and had trained many young aspiring wrestlers there. The well known civil servant Navarathna Rama Rao was the officiating Tasildar in T.Narasipur.

Navaratna Rama Rao was an accomplished wrestler; he would come riding on his horse to Sosale and enjoy a bout of wrestling with Rangappa in the Arena there.

Our father was very fond of wrestling. Whenever opportunity arose he would make a trip to Mysore, accompanied by his disciples, to watch the wrestling matches there. Well known wrestlers such as Thimmaiah, Papiah, Chikkaiah, Amaruddin, Basaviah were friends of our father. The wrestling Akhada situated in Anekaravatti of Mysore was where most of the wrestling competitions would be held under the leadership and supervision of late Sardar Gopala Raja Urs. Our father was a regular visitor to this Akhada.

Hundi Krishnamacharya

Our family fortunes improved once our father married our mother Kalyanamma who was a close relative of the affluent Hundi Krishnamacharya. Hundi literally means treasure in Kannada. Hundi Krishnamacharya was a very rich financier and it was said that there was hardly anyone who had not borrowed money from him. As he was very strict in the financial affairs of borrowals and returns very many of the people who have borrowed money from him resented his dealings and became very jealous-Naturally there were many

who were scheming to finish him off. But this could not be done as our father was always there for his protection. However, an opportunity came up which suited the debtors who were scheming to finish Hundi Krishnamacharya. On this occasion Our father had to be out of station for some work. The person who owed money to Krishnamacharya- It is said the amount ran into thousands-invited Hundi Krishnamacharya to come to the Town to collect his dues. Unsuspecting Krishnamacharya started, alone and in the early morning with no protection. He was killed 2 miles from the destination.

Srinivasa Rangacharya as minor guardian

Our father returned same afternoon and was shocked at the turn of the events. Hundi Krishnamacharya's wife had passed away some years ago leaving two young children behind. Now this huge financial empire which has to be managed. The transactions ran into lakhs of rupees. It became inevitable for our father to step in and assume a leading role. He ended up performing obsequies and other related rituals of his benefactors death. This was followed by repeated appeals and foray into legal courts to investigate the murder of Hundi Krishnamacharya. The services of a leading advocate of those days in Mysore, M.D. Narayana Iyengar was hired. Our father was appointed as 'Minor guardian' of the young Sahukar Seshadri Narasimhacharya.

Involvement in this legal wrangle gave him an amazing proficiency in legal matters! There was very little in legal matters that he did not know of! The layers representing the case were merely the name-sake! Our father took such

care of the finances of this ‘Minor’ nephew that by the time he became an adult big enough to assume financial responsibilities, there was more than four lakhs in the kitty! Pity was that this Sheshadri Narasimhacharya fell into bad company and advisers that all the property and the money his uncle had earned for him got spent and he ended up as a priest to earn his livelihood! That was a sad hour! Perhaps that was what fate had ordained for him! “Avashyamanubhoktavyam Krutam Karma Shubhashubham” Meaning one has to experience the effects of Karma whether good or bad.

Our father had performed the marriage of Sheshadri Narasimhacharya with a girl from Kumbakonam. Some of Sheshadri Narasimhacharya’s friends brought a split in his family through their evil design. This culminated in Sheshadri Narasimhacharya leaving his legally wedded spouse. Our father tried his best to patch up this rift but, all his well-meaning efforts became futile. At last, the lady was sent back to her parents’ home in Kumbakonam with a settlement amount of thirty-five thousand rupees. But, the wheels of fortune turned and Sheshadri who had lakhs lost all that wealth and ended up as a pauper. He had to literally beg for his survival.

Our father was greatly moved by his nephew Sheshadri Narsimhacharya’s plight. He went back to that wife (who was sent back) , pleaded and succeeded in uniting the couple. Loss of credibility to those who were jealous of Sosale Rangappa.

There were very many who became jealous of our father’s prosperity. It was far too sudden for them to digest it. These people started scheming to bring him down! Father had not kept a meticulous account of the transactions which he had undertaken on behalf of this ‘Minor Guardianship’. This was partly because of the total faith and trust he had in his nephew. He never thought that this nephew he had brought up would turn against him.

Sahukar Sheshadri Narasimhacharya also looked up to our father and was deferential towards him. But, he did not have a mind of his own. And he had this weakness of listening to people who carried tales! Such enemies of father convinced Sheshadri to insist that father should submit records of all financial transactions undertaken by him. Unfortunately, father had not kept any detailed records of the financial transactions.

It came to such a pass that enemies of our father persuaded Sahukar Sheshadri to take recourse to legal action. It has already been mentioned that the Sahukar had a weakness - that of listening to those who carry tales.

Sahukar Sheshadri Narasimhacharya complained to the court about financial mismanagement. It was only the beginning! Enemies of father succeeded in sending Sheshadri Narasimhacharya to his wife's place in Kumbakonam as they thought if he remained in Mysore, he might get influenced by our father.

Father was shocked at this turn of events! He realised the only solution lay in his nephew declaring in front of the judge that he has total faith in the role played by Our father.
Father went to Kumbakonam to meet his nephew; the plan was to meet, convince him and bring him back to Mysore to depose in front of the Judge.

But, the enemies of our father came to know of his trip and they planned something even more sinister! They embarked upon a plan to physically assault our father which would scare him and make him return to Mysore; And, if this did not work, do something to incapacitate him. With this in mind, they hired four to six goondas (hooligans) and asked them to unleash mayhem on Our father.

It was evening dusk. Father had just then washed and finished his evening prayers, Sandhyavandana, near the River Kaveri in Kumbakonam. The goons attacked our father with staffs.

Father did not know how to repel this attack as there were far too many attackers.

He somehow summoned all his strength, picked up sand in his hands, threw it at the goons and ran for his life; In this melee' his udi- Cloth wound round his waist also was lost. He ran and hid himself in a strange house. But, there was another problem. There was a lonely woman living in that house who was about to start screaming!

Father fell at her feet and told her about his plight. He somehow convinced her of his misfortune. That woman took kindly to father's circumstances, protected him and also facilitated a secret meeting between our father and his nephew Sahukar Sheshadri Narasimhacharya. The moment he met our father, he was convinced of father's innocence and felt guilty for having suspected someone who had brought him up as much more than his own son. That merciful lady also helped our father and his nephew to reach Mysore. The day of the Judicial enquiry arrived; Thee was a huge crowd in front of the Court. Enemies of our father were in high spirits and were certain that maximum punishment will be levied on our father. The Court named the defendant and the plaintiff; at that opportune moment the maternal uncle and nephew entered the Court Hall! The nephew completely endorsed all the financial dealings undertaken by his uncle, our father!

The case got summarily dismissed!

Loss of a son

It is said that Lakshmi, the Goddess of wealth flits all the time- She is Chanchale(meaning fickle). Father enjoyed the good grace of this Goddess albeit for a very short span of time. The

family was big comprising two daughters and seven sons. The wedding of Janakamma, the elder daughter was celebrated with all pomp. And so was the wedding of the eldest son, Tatappa, for these were the days of prosperity and wealth.

However, tragedy struck very soon. Barley one year after he got married, Tatappa got infected with Plague and succumbed to it. Our sister-in-law Ranganayakamma, was barely nine years old when she became a widow. It must be remembered that child-marriages were the norm those days. This was the same son our father had saved from drowning- along with thirty-nine people in the flood waters of the river Kaveri. But, he succumbed to plague and this pain of losing his eldest son haunted him throughout the remainder of his life.

Living in Krishnapura

It was customary for the townspeople to abandon their homes and shift to a far off place, a quarantine - to escape from deadly diseases like Plague, Small Pox, influenza and so on. It must be remembered that vaccines and antidotes were yet to be invented then. There were instances of many who would relocate to another place to escape from the epidemic -though they would not necessarily be allowed entry to that place too.

Our father was caught in such a predicament- This was around the year 1903. Hid eldest son had succumbed to Plague a few months earlier. Unfortunately, this epidemic made its appearance again!

Mother was in the family way. Our father got mother and the young children into a boat started rowing the boat in the direction of T. Narasipura to escape from the epidemic; His intention was to remain in T. Narasipura till the epidemic had run its course. Misfortune followed the family there too! A rich merchant of T.Narsipura, perhaps apprehensive of the

Plague infection our family may bring in, went to the Amuldar, the head of administration and requested that this family should not be permitted to anchor in T. Narasipura. Strangely enough, this rich man was also a relative of the family!
The Amuladar was made to prevail upon the request by the rich man - Even as the boat carrying our father and his family was about to reach the banks, the Amuldar declared a lock-down! This enraged father so much that he declared from the boat itself, " If not your, I will protect my family living in the forest; but, this order of yours is shameful", and continued the journey- The family reached town of Krishnapura - My elder sister Rukminamma was born in this town.

House in the Town Sosale

Our father faced the tragedy of losing his eldest son with full courage and a firm mind, and determined to rebuild the family. In managing the affairs of the house, our grandmother- mother's mother-held the reins! And she managed it with wonderful efficiency. But, till now the family did not have a house of their own. Father decided to build one now – And like all other tasks he had undertaken, this was an adventure too!

He purchased a fairly big site in Krishnarajapura Agrahara of Sosale town and made preparations to build a dwelling there. He built a kiln in the site to bake bricks and worked along with the labourers. When the excavation was undertaken to lay the foundation for the house, two big earthen pots were found- One containing charcoal and the other sand! Who would have thought that these were ominous signs of the misfortune that would strike the family soon?

It was not an auspicious beginning for, as the walls came up,

the neighbour complained to the Amuldar that father had transgressed into their property holding. This was certainly not true. The complaint was lodged out of sheer envy.

But, what the complainant did not know was that the then Amuldar, Navaratna Rama Rao knew father! He sent for Our father and said, " Rangacharre, here is a challenge to your adventure now! I have to come and make a spot-inspection as per the procedures because of this complaint. I plan to be there in seven or eight days. If the walls come up by that time and the roof is ready, it will be beneficial for you!".

Our father accepted this seemingly impossible challenge! To construct all the walls and then the roof within the next seven or eight days? Father joined hands with the labourers, worked round the clock, and the dwelling was complete in the next eight days! (One needs to realise that those days, there was no concrete roofing. The roof was a latticework of bamboo and reeds fixed into the walls and covered with local clay tiles and / or dry hay) When Amuldar Navaratna Rama Rao arrived at the site for inspection, the home was complete with the roof too!

However, to placate the neighbour who had filed a complaint, he addressed our father in a reprimanding tone and said, " Ayya! You appear to be a very unruly person! You have built a house without obtaining permission from us. This is an unpardonable offence. Action will be initiated against you as per law"!

He turned towards the neighbour and said "Swami, it has gone beyond our reach as the roof is also constructed. Amuldar has no powers to initiate any disciplinary action now. You may please approach the civil court for justice" and left after saying a few words of comfort.

The neighbour cooled down. A beautiful house was built after a spirited endeavour! Our father personally undertook the task of plastering with 'Vajra gare' – Literally, a diamond-tough

plaster. The house warming function was performed with much pomp and glory!

Kalyanamma's demise

Our mother Kalyanamma, passed away barely one year after we moved into the new house. Our father was barely forty. The family was big, comprising of six sons and two daughters. My eldest brother was sixteen and I was hardly two years old. The eldest daughter and son were already married. My younger brother was just two months old. Mother had left such a big family behind.

Lakshamma; our grandmother and our succour

Our aunt and grandmother stepped in now to assume the responsibility of running the house. Our grandmother Lakshama had the huge task of taking care of the grandchildren in the face of the loss of her elder daughter, the mother of eight children.

Our grandmother Lakshamma prevailed upon our father to shift the family to Mysore as she was apprehensive that rural life may not be conducive to the childrens' development. Amidst all this, father's mother; our paternal grandmother Yadugeeramma, was making all preparations for the second marriage of our father. Lakshamma was scared about

the children's plight if our father also acquiesced with his mother's idea of a second marriage. "If you agree for a second marriage, I will push all these children into the River and I will also commit suicide by jumping into the river", she cautioned our father. Our father held his mother-in-law in great esteem; was not only grateful to her but was also in awe of her! Grandmother's words had a telling effect on him. He abandoned the thought of a second marriage completely!

The family in Mysore

Grandmother was highly cultured and sophisticated in her thinking even though she was not highly educated in the formal sense. She was an excellent house-maker. She prevailed upon our father to shift the family to Mysore. Our father bought a house in Devirammanni Agrahara in Mysore. The family settled down in Mysore.

Alamelamma, our aunt; mother's younger sister, was married to Kalale Gunja Narasimhacharya and had settled down in Devamba Agrahara in Mysore. Gunja Narasimhacharya, her husband, was employed in the bungalow of Colonel Desiraja arasu and the used to be in charge of the 'puja-room' in the 'Chamundi-Totti' of the Mysore palace. This couple had no children of their own. It was probably divine will that Alamelamma would assume the responsibility of filling up the maternal vacuum left by Kalyanamma.

Lakshamma's management

The house was managed efficiently by our maternal grandmother Lakshamma. Our father was perpetually on the move - he would give the money necessary to run the family to his mother-in-law and away, he would go! Those were difficult days. The family was big too. Gradually it came to such a pass that household articles needed to be traded to run the family.

Grandmother was of a generous disposition! Festivals were a grand affair too. She was very caring too! Perhaps, she thought that the young children should not feel the absence of their mother.

This was her daily routine. She would be up very early and after cleaning up the front and backyards, would feed the children. It was customary to have cooked rice soaked in cold water (generally kept in a clay pot), drained and mixed with either curry or curds, with a pickle - this would be the first meal of the day.

She would then leave for the huge tank on the outskirts of the town- Doddakere (literally a big tank) , wash all the clothes, bathe, return home, and then start cooking again. Her cooking was exquisite.

The younger daughter Alamelamma and her husband were invited home for any special event. This couple did not have children of their own but, took special care of us as if we were children of their own!

There was always a respectful distance between our father and us.- It was a different story with our uncle, Gunja Narasimhacharya. All of us were very fond of him and felt close to him. This couple would be with us almost every other day, talking to us, humorously till late at night!

This couple would also act as the mediating party if we needed to ask our father for anything! Gunja Narasimhacharya and Alamelamma would happily mediate with our stern father , on our behalf.

And our grandmother Lakshamma- we would not dare take any liberties with her as we thought she was a formidable figure.

Rukminamma's wedding!

Amidst all this, the wedding of my sister Rukminamma got fixed! There is a saying, "Tena vina, Thrinamapi nachalati!"; meaning, without the Lord's will even a blade of grass cannot sway in the wind.

The Wedding was just on these lines!

The wedding was scheduled to be held but the groom was defective in the eye! The invitations were also mailed. My brother arrived a day prior to the wedding. He used to work as an overseer in the engineering department. Father who had gone out of town returned by midnight.

My brother became furious that the groom selected and fixed to marry our sister was visually handicapped (We use the word 'challenged' these days!) He went straight to my aunt and uncle and asked them how this alliance got approved? He also asked them quite forcefully, why they did not object to this alliance?

No words could placate him. He announced that he will take our sister away from all this right then.

A very old Srivaishnava Brahmin came home that time

seeking Bhiksha. He lived in the same Agrahara our uncle lived in. Incidentally, his eldest son had lost his wife very early after the marriage. That family subsisted on the frugal fellowship he got while studying in the Sanskrit Pathashala. “Why not ask that boy if he is willing to marry your sister?”, asked uncle.My brother agreed and the negotiations started immediately. The boy’s family were delighted. The wedding was to take place at the anointed muhurtam the next day morning- albeit with a change of groom!

The original groom’s family had no inkling of what was going on this side - they were also busy preparing for the wedding. But, information reached them by the night and they tried to stall the wedding - but it could not be stopped.

Our father knew nothing about all this. He learnt about the change of groom only the next morning, just before the wedding. As he did not pay much attention to the family affairs, he had not noticed this - he did not express anything. The wedding ceremony was held - our sister got married to the groom suggested by our uncle and approved by everyone else!

The marriage was also a God-send for Rukminamma’s in-laws.! They prospered too as her husband gained expertise in many branches of Sanskrit and secured a permanent teaching job. He became a professor too and is enjoying a retired life now.

Kutta Iyengar of Komarnapura

Our father was very close to his cousin, Kutta Iyengar of Komarnapura. He was father’s maternal uncle’s son and bonded very well with father. Both of them were of similar complexion but, were of contrasting build. Kutta Iyengar

was of a slim build where as our father was a giant! Kutta Iyengar's scholarship and adherence to the traditional rituals were phenomenal and so was his hospitality. His daily routine consisted of inviting guests home and treating them well. Not surprisingly, almost all of his property was spent on this habit of his - treating guests.

It has already been mentioned that our father was very close to Kutta Iyengar- In fact his was the only house father felt comfortable enough to spend weeks if not months. Komarnapura is situated around forty miles from Sosale. When Kutta Iyengar's mother passed away, the information reached our father who was at that time in Sosale. Father started to participate in the obsequies. He filled up a huge cauldron with water from the River Kaveri, placed it on his shoulder and started running. He reached Komarnapura, bathed the dead body with the holy waters of Kaveri he had brought with him and took care of the other aspects of the funeral too- Such was his intimate bond with Kutta Iyengar!

Grandmother and Aunt Alamelamma

Our family was everything to grandmother. She took such good care of us children that it was almost like a worship-ritual for her.

Aunt Alamelamma returned to our house after she lost her husband and became a widow; As our grandmother was advanced in her years, it came to our aunt to take care of the aged grandmother and the maturing young children. We would have really been a sorry lot if not for the care and love of these two wonderful women. Most of my brothers and sisters including me, grew up under the care of aunt Alamelamma. I was just two years old when my mother passed away and Alamelamma took charge of me. My

brother was barely two months old and our aunt Hundi Lakshamma assumed his maternal care. She managed to locate a woman called Deviri who had unfortunately lost her child, brought her home and entrusted the responsibility of weaning and providing motherly care to my brother – A task Deviri performed admirably well. She and her husband Nanjunda became surrogate parents to my brother with no expectations in return! Even now (when my brother is over fifty years of age) she refers to my brother as my child- she became a mother to all of us.

Alamelamma's Step-child!

Alamelamma was desirous of adopting me as her son- a step child, after all, she had nurtured me and taken care of me! I must have been ten or twelve years old at that time when I was struck by Typhoid fever- This was an almost fatal disease then. I lay in bed moaning and suffering for nearly forty days. My hands and lips started going numb it was said that it was an inauspicious day as far as the stars were concerned. Our father came to shift me from room to Veranda, a sure sign that all hopes for my survival were lost! But Aunt and grandmother did not let him do it. "If the child has to depart, let it go from within the house", they insisted.

But then, at that moment, our father addressing our aunt uttered something about my future: "This child is yours, not mine" he declared! Strangely enough, the moment these words came out of his mouth, I regained consciousness and the only word that came out of my mouth was ," Itthee" (instead of chitthee; a word in Tamil for aunt!)

Gradually I got better too! Our father officially handed over my responsibilities to my aunt within a year or so in a ritual

of adoption with the god of fire "Agni" as a symbolic witness! I became a child of my aunt Alamelamma in the complete sense of the word! She is my Goddess, my Deity! God's bounty!

Days of difficulties

Hardship struck the family again! Those were days of financial hardship. All the family jewels got sold. However, as all the children had good education, each of them could run their families well. Our elder sister was also fortunate enough to get married into a prosperous family. But, misfortune pursued her family too as the lands and money gifted to her by father got stolen! Her in-law's property also passed into someone else's hands and they too became poor. The loans they had taken affected our father too! He had to bear that burden too!

Humour in times of adversity

Father was neck deep in debt but his sense of humour came to his rescue time and again! In fact, it became his strategy to postpone the encounters with his creditors! "Sahebare", he would assure the Muslim creditor, "I will return your money in a day or two. If not, I will arrange for celebration of sugarcane ceremony in your name tomorrow". The context to this ceremony is in the traditional death rituals of an iyengar family. When a person dies, the surviving eldest son performs

the cremation and other rituals for the first twelve days from the date of death. On the thirteenth day, a cleansing ceremony called "Shubha Sweekaram"(meaning ending of mourning period) is performed. As a part of this ceremony, the son carriers a consecrated brass pot containing holy water on his head and goes on a short procession accompanied by priests, each carrying a long sugarcane stick with the fronds intact, chanting hymns and scriptures. This ceremony is called "Karpum Kodam" in tamil and is colloquially known as sugarcane ritual by the uninitiated non-iyengars: especially other castes and muslims do not know the significance and connotation of what my father called "Kabbina Jalle Utsava" or sugarcane stick and frond ceremony. The muslim creditor would go away happily apeased by the thought a special ceremony would be performed in his name without realising that this would mean he would have to be dead!

On some other occasion he told another person from whom he borrowed money, “If I don’t return your money by tomorrow, I will be a Vipra (Brahmin! In Sanskrit)” and disarm the person, who was obviously from another caste and did not know that in Sanskrit Vipra is a respectful address for a brahmin!

When we were young, we used to ride a bicycle in front of him. Our father would say, “Though I have learnt many arts of physical fitness, I never learnt to ride a bicycle. I have now decided to learn that too”, he would chuckle!

Our father’s passion for the stage.

Our father was very fond of watching plays/dramas! In fact he would walk from one town to another town to watch a theatre performance! The troupe of A.V. Varadhacharya who had the title of ‘Nataka Shiromani’ (A jewel in the crown of Theatre!) was one of his favourites. There were many times he would

promise us that he would take us for a performance and didn't; much to our displeasure.

Obstacles and Impediments our father faced!

Our father experienced many hardships as he got on in years. His financial difficulties have already been mentioned. But the loss of our grandmother Lakshamma devastated him. To add to that, our sister-in-law had passed away years earlier leaving five children behind and this caused enormous pain to father. This, coupled with the elder daughter's financial troubles and his helplessness in not being of help only added to his agony. His body shrunk and the eye sight diminished. Though he was putting up a brave front, the fact of loss of his physical prowess could not be concealed.

In his old age, our father felt comfortable in spending time in either of these two houses - Alamelamma's house in Mysore and his eldest daughter Janakamma's house in Sosale.
This is probably because he had the freedom to follow and practice all the traditional daily rituals in these two houses. Alamelamma's house was a 'choultry' - In fact a huge human contingent made it their home! Our grandmother, father, my eldest brother and his children.

Srirangacharya, my elder brother had established his legal practice by now and was planning upon building a new house of his own. Our father assumed charge of construction of this new home- from laying of its foundation to the floor work - and handed over a wonderful residential dwelling to our brother.

Final days of Sosale Rangappa

Our father led an unselfish life dedicated to helping everyone who he came across irrespective of their caste, religion or financial status, thus earning the goodwill and gratitude of so many people! But even as his as age, it felt as though even the God of death 'Kala Purusha' was scared to take this strong bodied benevolent man!

He suffered a stroke and his mind became disoriented. But, interestingly enough, his regular daily transactions receded into the background and he became totally immersed in the regular chanting of 'Vedas'! This was coupled with a non-stop desire to be in in the presence of the deities. Any kind of obstruction to this desire would send him into a state of wild temper! Or, a tearful expression of his helplessness - these were the only changes in his behaviour after the stroke he experienced.

We shifted our father to our sister's house in Sosale as we felt it would be better if he remains close to his beloved River Kaveri. My elder brother also lived there. Our father would keep listening to the holy scriptures of 'Shri Bhashyam' and 'Rahasya' , and other recitations of holy scriptures by my brother Rangaswamy Iyengar, a scholar in Sanskrit. He would only remember his ancestors and his close relative Kutta Iyengar of Komarnapura- And nothing else!

End of a blessed soul

Our father passed away in the year 1939 after completing 73 years of remarkable life! His end came on a day in Shravana Shukla on a Saptami on a day of his birth star! Even here he was fortunate as the holy pontiff of the Mutt of the family, Srimad Andava Yativarya came to Sosale on an unexpected visit. This was the occasion for much celebration in Sosale town and it was felt by everyone that our father was blessed! To be fortunate to receive the holy blessings of the pontiff was memorable indeed!

People from all walks of life from many surrounding villages came to attend our father's funeral and shed tears
We were fortunate to have him as our Paterfamilias! His memory is our daily worship!

PART 2

SOSALE RANGAPPA: A LIFE STORY (continued)

Originally written in Kannada
by Sosale Rajagopala Iyengar

Translated to English
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There is a famous saying in Sanskrit, “Paropakaraya Punyaya Papaya para peedanam” which extolls the act of helping others in distress. There are very many who follow the dictum faithfully expecting nothing in return. ‘Nisvartha Nishkama Kayaka’- Selfless action with no desire whatsoever is one of the highest goals envisaged for the mortals. Our father belonged to this group of people who revelled in public service.

That he had a wide circle of friends, and followers belonging to all sections of the community has already been mentioned in the earlier chapters. Our father was also a fearless person willing to undertake any adventure- a kind of dare devil. He was an excellent oarsman, wrestler and known for his physical prowess.

I will now put on record some of the adventures he was involved in -Some are so hard to believe they appear incredible! Here they are!

Transporting a wooden logs

The Jodidar of Sosale town was a relative of my father, and a dasharatra Jnati (A traditional description of a relative meaning he shared the same paternal lineage and had to observe ten days of soothaka or staying away from contact with others when a male descendent of our family passed away). Jodidar meant a person of considerable wealth and this person was no exception to that rule. This Jodidar proceeded to build a huge villa - a bungalow – befitting his status in Sosale. Huge wooden logs were procured for this purpose and stored near the river in Gargeshwari, a small town on the opposite banks to that of Sosale on the River Kaveri.

But, transporting these logs from Gargeshwari to Sosale Became a huge challenge mainly because there was no bridge across the river and these had to be brought on rafts crossing the river. The Jodidar commissioned many labourers for this purpose. Let alone transporting the logs, they could not even move the huge logs even one bit! The Jodidar did not know what to do? He at last approached our father for help! Father readily agreed.

He went to Gargeshwari with ten of his accomplished body-builders and wrestlers. They lifted each of those heavy logs – ten of those wrestlers and only father at one end - and loaded them into the boat.

And that is how the Jodidar’s bungalow came to be built!

Lifting the cart loaded with Jaggery

Once, a bullock-cart, drawn by two bullocks , carrying a heavy load of more than five to six hundred pindis (a pindi is a pack containing around 50 cubes of jaggery) of jaggery had slipped near the wash lands of Muguru town, got lodged in a huge crevice there(called addahalla: see description of Muguru addahalla in appendix 1) and the wheels were sunk deep down in the slush. The bullocks had stumbled, lost their balance and had become airborne. The ropes fastened around the bullocks' necks became taut and they were in tremendous agony with their forelimbs trembling in fear and despair. More than twenty people were trying desperately to get to the front portion of the cart so that the mute animals could get some relief.

Our father was on his way to Komarnapura on foot then. And this was on his path. This must have been divine intervention. Our father saw the scene and the commotion and decided to act. He tied his Udi to his waist a little tighter and crawled below the cart, turned his body down so that his back could get the right leverage , used all the strength at his disposal to jack the cart up. The cart wheels came unstuck and slowly lifted up. The bullocks could now stand on their feet and they pulled the cart out of the mire!

This display of incredible strength astonished the people who were gathered there. The cart rolled forward smoothly.
A number of People in the crowd recognised Rangappa. Everyone kept exclaiming, "Oh!What an adventure, Rangappa! Astonishing feat! Blessed, Blessed our Rangappa!"

Altercation with highway robbers

Those were the days when our family relocated from Sosale town to Mysore city. On a particular night, our father had to travel from Sosale to Mysore. There was hardly any means of transport those days. Travellers had to cross the River Kaveri by boat, reach Gargeshwari and then board a bullock cart towards Mysore.

A caravan of ten or twelve bullock carts would start from Gargeshwari at around ten o'clock at night- The caravan was to safeguard oneself from the threat of attack by the highway robbers. The caravan would travel leisurely in the path familiar to the bullocks and would reach Mysore in the early hours the next day.

Our father had three thousand rupees in his possession that day. Needless to say it was a huge amount! Four dacoits had somehow learnt about father's possession also boarded the same cart under the guise of fellow travellers. This happened to be the first cart in the caravan and the bullocks were quick and sharp too was the pilot of the cart. Consequently, this bullock cart raced ahead and very soon was far ahead of the remaining carts in the caravan; by the time this first cart reached the place called,' Agasara Halla' (washland of the washerman), the other carts were around two miles behind. Agasara Halla was a place away from any hamlets - it was past twelve at night and dark. This was also the much-preferred spot for the highway robbers. As soon as the cart reached the Agasara Halla, the four dacoits jumped out of the cart and stopped the cart from moving ahead. Our father suspected something amiss and hid the money-bag inside the grass spread on the planks of the cart.

Our father started a mock run away from the cart. The thieves chased him down and asked him to handover the purse. They even threatened to kill him. Father feigned innocence but, they did not believe him! This must have gone on for a while

for soon they could hear the jingle of bells of the bullocks pulling the other carts of the caravan.

Our father came up with another act now: pretending that he is going to handover the money-bag to the thieves, he rushed to one of them, lifted him straight into air and hurled him towards another standing near by. Both of them stumbled into the ditch there. The other two robbers, having heard the sound of approaching carts, ran away. The two who had fallen into the ditch crawled out of the ditch and escaped too! The carts which had fallen behind now joined the first cart and the caravan proceeded towards Mysore. The remaining journey was without any mishap!

The art of catching an infamous dacoit

There was an infamous dacoit in Sosale who used to be a terror to all the surrounding villages. Nobody dared touch him! There was no one to contain him as he used to threaten everyone who crossed his path.

This dacoit once dared to climb up the coconut palm in our backyard to steal coconuts! To his misfortune, our father was in town that day. He rushed home when he learnt that the dacoit had climbed up the coconut tree to steal the nuts. The dacoit had plucked and packed the coconuts in a gunny sack and was climbing down when our father reached the scene! The dacoit was also well built and looked like a pehelwan (a body- builder and wrestler!). When he saw our father approach to apprehend him, he jumped down and rushed towards him to slash him with the sharp machete he held in his hand. Our father was anticipating that move! He too

rushed, pushed the dacoit down and managed to kick the machete away from his hand. He easily lifted him up, untied his dhoti wound round his waist, and using it as a rope, tied the thief to the tree. Next, he brought a long rope from inside the house, tied the robbers limbs pushed his body neck down into a gunny sack, lifted the sack onto his back, walked with this luggage to the police outpost in Thirumakudalu Narasipura four kilometres away and handed him over to the police personnel there.

The current head pontiff of Sri Vyasaraja Mutt himself was a witness to this daring adventure as above and he narrated it to me.

Saving the lives of people stranded in floods

‘ To help others come what may’ was the sole principle our father lived by! This principle landed him in extremely dangerous situations! But he always emerged triumphant in such situations. The most memorable is one such when he saved forty lives which were marooned in the swirling flood waters of the River Kaveri.

This was in the year 1903- last few days of ‘ Jeshta masa’ (roughly mid-July during the monsoon season). River Kaveri was in spate! The Krishna Raja sagara dam across the River Kaveri was not even in its planning stage then. The flood waters broke the embankments and almost all low-lying areas were submerged in the waters. Many small villages were totally submerged. The flood waters even reached our back-yard at home in Sosale town which was almost a mile away from the river; the waters would slash against the back-yard

door too! It was a frightening sight.

The Madhvaraja Mutt owned an orchard on the banks of the river Kaveri; this was known as ‘Sanyasi topu’ (orchard of the meditators and mendicants)! If the flood waters reached this topu, it was thought of as total floods! But, this time, the waters not only submerged this topu but also pushed in more than half- a- mile into town. A stone platform was built in the Vyasaraja Mutt for Mutt festivities and functions. The flood waters in the Sanyasi topu were more than twenty feet in depth and more than two feet high and the waters lay on top of the stone platform popular as “Kallu-Katte”! As there was no bridge across the river, most of the transport and conveyance were only by boats or coracles.

Tatappa, our eldest brother, was scheduled to come to Sosale from Mysore. He had boarded the cart from Mysore to Gargeshwari early in the morning, had boarded the boat that was leaving for Sosale. Ranganatha Chakravarty, older brother to our brother-in-law had accompanied Tatappa. It was a twin-boat packed to capacity of 40 passengers. Four experienced oarsmen, Dodda Mantya, Chikka Mantya, Kotti Sidda and Racha were piloting the boat in choppy waters. In the twin-boat the passengers included Tatappa, Ranganatha Chakravarty, Prabhakara Ramanna, Ketanda Patti Lakshmi Narasimha Chakravarty, A woman with a two-month-old baby, Amir Saab of Kalkuni and many others totalling 40 passengers.

The boat sailed on – it was quite safe and uneventful till ‘Sanyasi Topu’; at that point the boat lost its balance making the oarsmen nervous - they thought the boat will go down! They manoeuvred the boat downstream. In that melee, the boat collided with a coconut palm which had uprooted itself . But a plank of the boat cracked due to the impact and the waters rushed throwing all the passengers into a panic mode. The pilots did everything to save the passengers. But that was of no use. They managed to steer the boat to the stone-platform(Kallu Katte in Kannada) and somehow managed to

make the passengers climb on to the stone-platform. The water current became furious now. The oarsmen now tied all the passengers to the coconut palm using a long rope. The palm was more than three-fourths submerged in the flood waters. Moving on to the stone platform was no easy task. Amir Saab somehow managed to climb up the coconut tree and let his Rumaal- headgear turban cloth down. It was long and the passengers managed to catch the 'Rumaal' and used it as a fulcrum to move to the platform.

The rain became a downpour! Everyone was drenched to the bone and stood shivering! The young mother and the infant baby were protected with a cloth cover! Tatappa and Ranganahta Chakravarty managed to swim about ten metres in those gushing waters and held onto a 'Gobbali' tree known for its toughness. It was literally forty passengers staring at a watery grave!

It was around eleven in the morning when all these events unfolded! Having failed in all their attempts to save the passengers, The four oarsmen chose to swim to the banks as a last resort to try and seek help from the villagers. They thought, as a last resort, to tie some wooden poles into a float-called Teppa- and to go back to the stranded people to try and rescue them! That was an adventure too with far too many risks. Preparing a float would take time and so would manoeuvring it to the stranded people against the heavy current. And how to ensure the safety of those people till help arrived? And what guarantee is there that these people will still be alive if and when help arrives?

The whole town had congregated and was watching this! Helpless as they were, what could they do except to sympathise? Everyone was in tears!

A tragedy ensued now- Prabhakar Ramanna was one of the unfortunate souls who was stranded on that stone platform along with his wife. Unfortunately, he was also carrying three hundred rupees in coins in a bag with him. As luck would

have it, in that melee the bag containing the coins fell into the water. His wife forced him to retrieve the money and sent him into the gushing waters. Prabhakara Ramanna got into the water to search for the money bag but the moment he stepped into the water, he was swept away! All the efforts by the oarsmen to save him were futile! Ramanna just disappeared in the floods!

Oarsman Ambiga Racha, was one of the boatsmen who swam ashore early to seek help. He came running to our home conveyed the information to Sabji, a house servant. It was he who informed our father that an elderly Brahmin was swept away in the flood waters.

All of the family knew about our elder brother, Tatappa's trip to Sosale that morning. Our father who was waiting for the arrival of his son had sat down to have his meal just then! A panic stricken Sabji, our servant screamed, "Rangappaji, Doni dubgaya, Tatappa Margaya " meaning ' Rangappaji, the boat sank, Tatappa drowned"- ghastly information struck father like lightning. He leaped up with a jerk and ran to the River saying, "I will return with my son - if not, I will also drown"! Other oarsmen who had reached the banks now gave the news that Tatappa was alive but stranded on the stone platform.

Our father got his spirits back and the news that Tatappa, his eldest son, was alive filled him with the necessary spirit and resolve for the incredible adventure that would follow soon after! A suitable plan to save those stranded and on the threshold of a watery grave also flashed in his thoughts! There was a huge cauldron kept against the wall of Siddur Madashetty's shop. This is essentially used to boil sugarcane juice to prepare Jaggery the traditional way. This is called a ' Kopparige'- And this was massive in size in which hundreds of gallons of sugarcane juice was boiled. Even ten pairs of hands could not move this cauldron.

It must have been the power of the moment! Our father

dragged the cauldron into the flood waters all by himself and started navigating it towards the stranded people with the help of an oar.

The moment the stranded people saw the floating cauldron come towards them, they started a melee to scramble on to the cauldron. But the Kopparige was not capable of carrying more than two or three people at a time. Father gave an assurance to all the thirty-nine passengers (one had lost his life trying to retrieve the money bag) that he will safely take all of them to the shore but, not more than three at a time. If this arrangement was not agreeable, our father threatened that he will leave the cauldron right there and swim back carrying his son on his shoulders!

Good sense prevailed as the stranded people realised that they will safely cross the flood waters. The first person allowed to board was the lady with the infant child; this was followed by Tatappa, then Ranganatha Chakravarty, followed by Amir Saab who was a dear friend. These four were safely brought to the shores. This safe passage gave our father additional mental strength! He guided the boat back and forth a number of times and brought all the thirty-nine stranded passengers to the safety of the shores. This went on from eleven in the morning until almost midnight!

Amidst all this commotion, Amir Saab's wife in Gargeshwari was informed of her husband's plight; Naturally she was anxious and sent her servant to personally check and report to her. The servant belonged to the Dalit community and was extremely devoted to his master. He reached the banks of the river but, could not learn anything else about his master's plight. This servant's devotion to his master was such that he dived into the flood waters and swam to the stone platform. He saw Amir Saab was safe but, perched on the coconut palm! He spoke to him and swam back in those dangerous waters to inform Amir Saab's wife that her husband was safe! Amir Saab was touched by this dare-devilry of his servant . Later, he honoured the servant with gifts amounting to thousands

of rupees!

Amir Saab's gratitude towards our father who had saved him from a certain watery grave was immense! He would express his gratitude till the end of his life! Sri Ranganatha Chakravarty was one of the passengers whom our father saved; I gathered all the details of this incredible adventure from his narrative.

Selfless Service

The news of this selfless remarkable adventure of our father reached the taluk Tahsildar (a senior revenue official) and from him to the Deputy Commissioner of the district and, at last, Sri Vanivilasa Sannidhana - the Queen-Regent of the State. The Queen-Regent was greatly impressed by this almost incredible adventure of a citizen of her state and she directed the commissioner- who is the head of the district- to suitably honour our father. The commissioner got father to his office, informed him how pleased the royalty was and also indicated the willingness of he court to honour him with a purse! Our father's financial status was delicate then- the royalty would have given him any amount in appreciation of his selfless deed.

But our father refused this offer with no second thought! How can that be selfless service if he desires or accepts some financial assistance in lieu of his adventure-service?
He rejected the very thought almost with a touch of pride or arrogance. Tapping his left shoulder with his right palm he is reported to have said, "Swami! What can you give me? My wealth treasure is the strength the almighty has given me! I will not aspire for any grant from anyone as long as I have that God-given strength in my arm".

The district Commissioner at last arranged a very impressive function in Diwan Rangacharlu Bhavan in Mysore and honoured our father with a Gold medal in recognition of his service to the State! But we never saw our father either wearing it on his person or flaunting it in any way! When the family was in deep financial crisis, he pledged it with our neighbour Shivadatti Srirangacharya for a sum of fifty rupees.

Many years later, when my brother learnt about this pledging, he got it released paying the amount and any interest thereof. This Gold medal, a family heirloom, remains in my brother's house even to this day as a testimony to our father's greatness!

(Since the celebration of the hundredth birth anniversary of Sosale Rangappa in 1966, I do not know the whereabouts of this heirloom. The only surviving evidence is a black and white photograph of the medal in the Kannada version of Sosale Rangappa's story which was written and published by my father on the occasion of the centenary celebrations of sosale Rangappa's birth. Interestingly, sometime later I asked my father about the medal. He said, "What is a medal? A piece of jewellery. We have a photograph as evidence and we have the record. None of us are interested in the gold medal. My brother redeemed it and his family can keep it. This is the opinion of all of us brothers", another example of the family's values.

PS: Sosale Mohana s/o Sosale Rajagopala Iyengar has added this footnote for the english version.)

An adventure even at the age of sixty plus!

All these adventures of our father recorded so far were a testimony to his prowess when he was young or even in his middle age! However, even when he had crossed sixty, he continued to display remarkable physical strength,

particularly when he was called upon for selfless service! That the family was in deep financial trouble when our father was in advancing years has already been commented upon! Once, he had gone to purchase rice in 'Santepete' the whole-sale market for grains in Mysore. He brought a "pallah" of rice, roughly about one hundred kilos of rice. The person in the shop wo was assigned the task of loading this sack of rice was struggling to lift the same! Naturally, our father commented in a lighter vein, "What is this? You are young! Is it so difficult to lift a sack of rice?"

The owner of the shop retorted by saying, "You think lifting a sack of rice is like eating pulicharu"? (rice and lentil curry) – The taunt was directed at vegetarian food too!
Our father could not take the taunt lying down- He rushed to the sack, lifted it with his left hand, placed it on his head effortlessly and retorted, "look at the prowess of someone who eats pulicharu only!"

The merchant was amazed at this incredible show of strength by an elderly Brahmin, regretted his unwanted criticism and apologised to our father!

The adventure of saving a drowning son of a neighbour

Our house was situated in Devirammanni Agrahara, near the hundred feet road in Mysore. Our father had the habit of sleeping in the outer veranda of our house. One early morning the silence was disturbed by the sound of something falling into water. The sound emanated from the well in the last house which belonged to the court jester and comedian Lakshmipathi Shastri. It was Shastri's nephew who had tumbled into the well.

Our father ran to the well the moment he heard the commotion! People had already gathered around the well by this time. The well was very deep and no one dared to jump in to rescue the boy who had slipped in.

Lakshmipathi Shastri saw our father and rushed towards him. He said, “Rangacharre, I have successfully donned the roles of a King, Queen, comedian, thief, servant, boatman, sailor and many more. But I have never had an opportunity to act as someone who goes into a well! You please assume that role and save our child” adding humour to anxiety. Our father immediately dived into the deep water, grabbed hold of the boy and brought him up. The boy was saved! This boy was alive till very recently!

Adventure in a boat again

The annual ‘Gandhapadi’ festivities celebrated in the Gunja Narasimha Swamy temple in Tirumakudalu Narasipura town was very famous! Our father took us all on one such occasion to participate in the festivities there - many others from the town also came with us.

It was also the time of seasonal floods. The oarsmen were rather new and inexperienced! All of us sat in the boat and crossed the river near Sangama (meeting of the Rivers Kaveri, Kapila or Kabini and a perennial river spring Sphatika Theerta)- It was uneventful but there were enough indications of a flood.

It was around early morning when the festivities at the temple got over. The river was already in spate. The boatmen had hidden the oars and gone away! We decided to spend the remaining hours until daylight in the ‘mantapam’ (a

square granite platform with a roof open on all four sides constructed on the steps leading to the river generally used both as a resting place for pilgrims and for temple rituals on festival occasions) and then start!

Our father assumed the role of an oarsman - we searched in vain for the oars. Our father took upon himself to steer the boat with the long staff he always carried with him. All of us boarded the boat. It was a smooth ride until we reached the Sangama where the two big rivers merged.

This point of convergence Sangama was notorious for whirlpools - as luck would have it, our boat got caught in one of the whirlpools and the boat started spinning round uncontrollably. It was frightening to be in this spinning boat! Onlookers had already gathered on the banks of the river in the town of Tirumakudalu Narasipura and were admiring the adventurous skills of the old man. However, the boatmen who were also standing there were mocking at this elderly Brahmin terming it a foolish adventure!

It became quite dangerous now and even our father wore a worried expression. An elderly person in the boat started abusing our father as to why he embarked upon such a dangerous enterprise risking their lives? Our father lost his temper now, “I am steering this boat with my children whose lives I treasure more than anything else. You are already very old. Though old I still have enough strength in my arms. I can easily reach the banks carrying all my children on my shoulders. Why should I bother about your plight? But you have abused me. I will push you into the water and steer the boat to safety. You can watch the adventure from the water”, he said. The old man realised his mistake and apologised profusely.

But the boat continued to whirl in the whirlpool. Using all his strength, our father held the staff against a rock and using it as a lever pushed the boat with exceptional force. The boat broke free from the whirlpool and came out. But it kept on

moving with the fierce current of the flood waters. Our father let the boat sail along for more than a furlong, waited for the opportune moment and using the staff, guided the boat to the banks of the river - to safety.

The boatmen who were watching all this drama from the opposite shores exclaimed! They had witnessed the remarkable strength and acumen of a “Mudi Haruva” – an old Brahmin!

Rescue of another person: This time a drowning woman

Vidwan Shama Rao’s house was situated almost four houses after ours in Devirammanni Agrahara. Shama Rao was a “Ghata vadya” artist. The couple had no children. One morning, Shama Rao’s wife slipped and fell into the well. Our father was sitting and relaxing in the veranda. Shama Rao came running and pleaded with my father to save his wife. Immediately, our father rushed to the well, jumped in and lifted the drowning woman up. It was obviously a suicide attempt as the woman pleaded now screaming, “Don’t lift me up and save me. I have decided to end my life!” Our father calmly replied, “Mother of all, for having committed the blunder of jumping into the well to save you, I will bring you up. You can jump into the well again after that. I assure you in God’s name that I will not come again to save you!” And he brought her up to safety. The woman was alive as late as just three years ago!

Bringing Lord Srinivasa Swamy idol to the Vontikoppal Srinivasa temple in Mysore

In addition to selfless service to the poor, our father was equally committed devotion to the almighty! The Lord Srinivasa of Tirupati was the family deity and our father would undertake at least one pilgrimage every year to the holy town of Tirupati in today's Andhra Pradesh. He initiated the custom of conducting rituals such as thread- ceremony (Brahmopadesam) for the boys in our family and the traditional head-shaving ceremony of all the children in the family for the first time to be observed in Tirupati - a custom that is in practice even today among my generation. Our father's great devotion to this deity had an interesting turn. Sahukar Chikkanna Das of Mysore was a great devotee of Lord Srinivasa. The idea of building a temple for Lord Srinivasa in Mysore took root in Chikkanna's mind. Attempts at building such a temple under the leadership of a great scholar and astrologer of the royal court, AsthanaMahavidwan Sampathkrishna Jois were initiated.

The team learnt that there was an ancient temple in Tirumala Sagara, on the way to the holy hillock town of Melukote but it was in a dilapidated condition. The main idol was that of Lord Srinivasa. However, there was no worship to the main deity. The temple itself was in a sorry state of affairs. The team formulated a plan to shift the stone pillars and the chief idol to Mysore town. Permission was obtained after requests and correspondence.

Now came the delicate task of shifting the stone pillars and such other parts of the original temple. This was successfully undertaken under the assistance and guidance of our father. And then came the crucial work of shifting the huge idol of Lord Srinivasa to Mysore. This was a very delicate operation

and no one came forward to undertake this task. Sriman Sampathkrishna Jois was fully aware of our father's devotion to this deity and also his prowess. He prevailed upon our father to accept this responsibility.

The heavy impressive idol had to be carefully lifted, loaded into a cart and brought to Mysore for installation. Our father successfully brought this idol to Mysore.

Sahukar Chikkanna Das built a magnificient temple in Vanivilasapuram, an extension of Mysore city to house the idol. The installation and consecration was done subsequently. This temple receives thousands of devotees even to this day. Our father declined to accept the remuneration offered by Sahukar Chikkanna for all his efforts! But Sahukar Chikkanna Das insisted; at last our father consented to let Sahukar Chikkanna Das bear the expenses of a pilgrimage to Ganga, popular as Ganga Yatra. Thus father also had a part to play in this holy task undertaken by Sahukar Chikkanna Das.

Before the end of this narration

I have made an attempt to record some of the adventurous acts of my father. Some of these are from my memory and of others who were witness to many of his selfless deeds. There is a famous saying in Kannada, "Upakari nanu ennu prakrutiya Jagake" roughly put, it means, 'I dedicate myself to the service of others in the world; my life/nature is for the world at large'; this was the nature of our father's personality which never aspired for recognition or praise for his deeds- " jagada pogalikege bayibidade" (not aspiring for accolades from the public). This narration is my holy offering to my father.
" The land that gives birth to great men is itself great;

Greatness is not borne out of birth, wealth or power. It is rather a complete blossoming of the potential of a person. Simplicity, service-mentality, peaceful co-existence and a life of control are the four paths in which the human persona blossoms to stabilise a life of culture.

India is a storehouse of such holy lamps. It goes without saying that many such individuals have lived in each of the millions of villages in our country.

The true nature of our ancient culture and civilisation will be brought to light if the lives of such people are recorded and published. It will inspire the future generations too and illumine the glory of Indian culture.

Bhadram- Shubham- Mangalam!!
Safe - auspicious - good fortune!!

APPENDIX I

Here are the current day photographs of certain places mentioned in the life story and adventures of Sosale Rangappa. These were compiled by Sosale Mohana, son of Sri. Sosale Rajagopalaiyengar, the sixth son of Sri Sosale Rangappa. The information given in the notes are from what Sosale Mohana knows about these places. Errors and omissions are entirely the fault of the compiler.

1. Banks of Kaveri River in Gargeshwari

The banks of the River Kaveri at Gargeshwari today. At the time of Sosale Rangappa, this place would have a number of boats waiting to transport passengers coming from Mysore by Bullock cart and intending to go to towns like Sosale, Belakawadi, Talakadu, Malavalli, etc.

The town of Sosale is on the opposite side, about a kilometre from the banks. Until almost 1980, one could walk from the town and bathe in the river. However, during one of the floods in the 80's a lot of silt was deposited on the banks at Sosale which in turn led to the growth of dense weeds and reeds there by blocking access to the River from Sosale.

2. The Ancient Gargeshwara temple

The picture shows the main entrance to the ancient Gargeshwara temple on the banks of the River Kaveri in the village Gargeshwari. The original perimeter wall and the smaller temple can be seen inside the main door. During Rangappa's time, this inner sanctum would be a resting place for people waiting overnight to catch the boat and also for shelter from the rains.

3. Srirangaraja Pura

The temple street in today's Srirangarajapura village. Traditionally, from over millenniums until almost late 1970's, the temple street in any village in South India generally housed Brahmin and priest families. Based on this custom, it can be safely assumed that Srinivasa Rangacharya aka Sosale Rangappa was born here and that he grew up here before moving to Sosale.

There are not even traces of the houses that existed on this street at his time. Almost all houses in the street are quite modern dwellings with latest amenities. Even the current temple priest's quarters are now cement structures.

4. Srinivasa Venugopala Swamy Temple, Sosale

The main entrance to the village temple of the deity Srinivasa Venugopala Swamy as it is today on the SKP Agrahara of Sosale where our family home built by Sosale Rangappa still stands. During and the times of Sosale Rangappa, the main entrance had a different façade. However, the sanctum sanctorum and the main temple hall still retains the original pillars and design and perhaps the idol of the main deity. The architectural style and the history of the nearby Somanathapura temple built during the Hoysala dynasty times gives us an estimated timeline of the construction to be between 13th and 14th centuries.

Like any other ancient temple in India, our village temple too has undergone modifications and cosmetic repairs on its precincts.

5. The house in Sosale built by Sosale Rangappa

The photograph above shows the front door of the house built by Sosale Rangappa in late 1890's. One of his great grandsons is currently living in this house with his wife. He has modified the original house to suit modern day living. However, most of the old perimeter wall, pillars and beams built by Rangappa are still maintained. Up until almost 1975, the enclosed veranda seen in the picture was an open area with concrete platforms and pillars on both sides of the entrance door. As a young boy, I have slept in this veranda on many nights. The house seen to the left of this house belongs to the relative who had falsely complained to the Amuldar about Sosale Rangappa encroaching on his land.

The original house built by Rangappa had a roof of baked local tiles tessellated on lattice works of Bamboo. Currently the house has a roof made from corrugated sheets. In the picture below, one can see a part of the original perimeter brick wall built by Sosale Rangappa himself with the help of workers.

6. Some views of the interior of Sosale Rangappa's house
6(a). The original entrance to the house

The door frames and the doors are the original ones installed at the time of constructing this house

6(b). The living room

The picture above shows the living room of our ancestral house as it is today. cross beams seen in above the level of the light bulbs are the original cross beams from late 1800's as constructed under Sosale Rangappa's supervision.

6(c). The ancient supporting pillars in the living room

The ancient method of supporting cross beams using a stone base platform and wooden pillars. The doors on either side of the green main door frame used to be store rooms for grains with a window at roof level to pour in the paddy. The doors would be opened partially to take out the required amount of paddy to mill for rice. The floor is now completely tiled. When I used to visit Sosale in early 1960's, the floor to the left of the pillars was made from concrete. The area to the right of the picture (where one can see an electric fan and scooter) had a granite stone floor with a wooden trough along the wall filled with hay. My cousin's family used to tether cows, bullocks and calves in this area at night and we the children used to sleep on the other side.

6(d). The connecting door to the traditional dining area in the house

This is the original door in the living room connecting the dining area on the other side. The original door has survived for over 120 years. One can even see the traditional Sri Vaishnava symbols of the wheel (Chakra) and the Conch (Shankha) features carved in the door panel. Incidentally, almost all the male members of Sosale Rangappa family were very tall. However, as per tradition, all the doors had a threshold each and were around five feet high. As a result, one had to bend or bow to pass through the doors. This was common in houses built before 1950's because culturally, by bowing down to enter the house, one showed humility and respect to the family living in the house.

Can you see the two iron link chains resting on the ring in the door frame? This was how one would lock the house in earlier times. There is an interesting anecdote about this particular ring. My uncle Shri T.S. Krishna Iyengar had a vertical mark on his forehead starting a centimeter above the nose bridge and going vertically upwards until the hairline. When he was a young boy, he tried to jump across the threshold of this door and his forehead hit the ring and he was so severely injured that the wound left a permanent mark on his forehead which looked like the red vermillion vertical line Sri Vaishnavas wear as a symbol of their faith.

6(e). The roof support structure of the roof

Those interested in techniques of construction of houses a century ago will appreciate the picture. Above the main supporting beams one can see the traditional cross beams that were built to support the lattice work of bamboo for the tiled roof. One can see the modern modification of ceiling fans fixed to the cross beams and corrugated iron sheets replacing the traditional country tiled roof.

6(f). The backyard of the house

The picture shows the backyard of Sosale Rangappa's house as it looks today. The well seen in the picture is the original well. However, the platform and other structures around the well are recent.

The coconut tree mentioned in the adventure of Rangappa catching a notorious thief is no longer there. I understand it was situated about twenty feet behind the well.

7. View of SKP Agrahara of Sosale as seen from the T. Narasipura – Bannur main road passing in front of the village pond

A picturesque view of the main temple street of Sosale called “SKP or Sri Krishna Raja Pura Agrahara”, named in honour of the benevolent king of Mysore Nalvadi Krishna Raja Wodeyar (Krishna Raja Wodeyar IV) who built the pond in front of the village to help villagers.

Until late 1960’s, as one walked along this street from the pond towards the temple, one could locate the Jodidar’s house on the right, Rangappa’s daughter Janakamma’s house opposite to it on the left, houses of few more Brahmin families on both sides and further on, closer to the temple, Sosale Rangappa’s house on the left.

7(a) A small part of Sosale Jodidar's house as it is today.

In Rangappa's story, there is an anecdote about how he was instrumental in transporting the heavy timber pillars across the river Kaveri from Gargeshwari to Sosale. These were installed in the great hall of this house. I understand that those original pillars were removed and transported elsewhere in late 1970's when the house was sold.

7(b) The land where Jodidar's house was situated.

Jodidar's house being that of a very well to do landlord was built on a a huge tract of land in SKP agrahara. The picture below shows a part of this land currently owned by a great grandson of Sosale Rangappa. He lives in the USA. He has built a small house on this land. Any member of Rangappa's descendants visiting Sosale are welcome to use the facilities of this house during their visit.

7(c) Janakamma's house in SKP agrahara, Sosale

The picture below shows the front view of the house of Janakamma , the eldest daughter of Sosale Rangappa, who lived in this house for a number of years.

I recall enjoying the culinary delights in my childhood which she prepared for my father and I during our annual visit to Sosale

Standing at the door is Shri. Sosale Murali, another great grandson of Sosale Rangappa who is currently occupying the ancestral home built by Sosale Rangappa.

8. Shri Vyasaraja Mutt, New Sosale

Modern day building of Sri Vyasaraja Mutt, Sosale. This Mutt is a very old seat of one of the branches of Dwaita (duality) philosophy propounded by the ancient sage and saint Sri Madhvacharya. Sosale Rangappa and his family, despite belonging to a different sect of Brahmins, were disciples of this Mutt.

In early 1900's, Rangappa's second son Rangaswamy Iyengar was appointed as a Vedic scholar at this Mutt. When the family celebrated Sosale Rangappa's birth centenary in 1966 at the family home in Sosale, the presiding chief guest was the then pontiff of this Mutt who performed prayer and worship and gave his blessings to all the people attending on that occasion.

Did you notice the name "New Sosale" in the title of this page? This Mutt is situated about one kilometre away from Sosale in a village called Vyasarajapura. In the past, the village where SKP Agrahara is situated was called Old Sosale and Vyasarajapura was also known as New Sosale.

9. Sanyasi Topu

Sanyasi Topu as it is today. One can see the weeds and reeds grown up on the banks of the river. As mentioned earlier, the rainy seasons in the 1980's brought a lot of silt that covered the sandbanks of the River Kaveri and resulted in an overgrowth denying access to the villagers to bathe in the river.

Where the woods at the back are seen is the approximate location of the Sanyasi Topu of late 1800's mentioned in the story of Rangappa rescuing 39 people stranded in mid river due to floods. Unfortunately, the stone platform "Kallu Katte" mentioned in the story where theses people were stranded no longer exists.

10. Gunja Narasimhaswamy temple in T. Narasipura

The town T. Narasipura derives its name from the words Tiruma Koodalu: the meeting point of three rivers Kaveri, Kapila and Spatika Sarovara and the name of the principal deity of the temple near the meeting point, Gunja Narasimha Swamy. The picture shows the current main entrance to the temple built in front of the original entrance door built by Hoysala kings in the 13th – 14th centuries.

A curious Anecdote

According to Hindu mythology, Narasimha is the fourth incarnation of Lord Vishnu on earth. The Hoysala kings mainly worshipped Vishnu in the form of Narasimha or Narayana.

The Narasimha temple in T. Narasipura was built at the confluence of three rivers similar to the holy city Prayag Raj near Allahabad, the location of the famous Kumbhamela, known for millenniums as one of the holiest pilgrim sites in India.

However, local folklore in T. Narasipura claimed that taking bath in the Sangama (meeting point of three rivers) at Tiruma Koodalu was a wee bit heavier in accrued punya(virtue or merit) when compared to bathing in the sangama at Prayag Raj and that this difference was equivalent to the smallest unit of weighing gold in ancient times known as Gunja, the weight of a single red seed from the Gunja tree (*Arbus precatorius* or Indian red liquorice). As this was attributed to the presence of Lord Narasimha, the presiding deity the temple at the sangama, the Narasimha Swamy temple in Tirumakudalu came to be known as Gunja Narasimha Swamy temple.

Some others who do not believe in the folklore claim that when the temple was built near the Sangama, there used to be a Gunja tree near the temple and to help pilgrims in identifying the temple, the Gunja tree was used as a landmark and over centuries, the name of the presiding deity changed to Gunja Narasimha Swamy.

Whatever the story, the name Gunja Narasimha was a popular name for male children in this part of Karnataka. Interestingly, my grandfather, the gentleman who adopted my father was named Gunja Narasimhacharya. He was born possibly in the year1875 in a village called Kalale and grew up in this village where the principal deity of the village temple is Lakshmikanta, another name of Lord Vishnu! One would expect this gentleman to be named after this deity. However, he was named after the principal deity of the temple in T. Narasipura, about ninety kilometres away. This is a measure of popularity of the ancient temple of Gunja Narasimha Swamy in T. Narasipura

11. The meeting of three rivers at Tirumakoodalu

The picture above was taken from the bathing ghats on the banks of the river Kapila just outside the Gunja Narasimha swamy temple. On the other side, you see the modern iron bridge across the river Kaveri built in the 1950's. The small island in the middle is close to the Sangama (where the three rivers Kaveri, Kapila and waters from the underground spring Sphatika Sarovara meet). The belief is that one can accrue a of punya or merit by taking a dip at the Sangama. The coracles are taking pilgrims who wish to bathe at the Sangama. They ply to and from the Gunja Narasimha temple. The banks to the right of the picture are from the side of Sosale. The village of Krishnapura is situated on the banks of the river Kaveri on the same side as that of Sosale about 14km downstream from the Sangama.`

During Rangappa's times, the only access to the Gunja Narasimha Swamy temple from Sosale would have been by boat. The events narrated in Rangappa's stories about taking his children for the festivities to the temple at T. Narasipura and that of the family coming by boat to Narasipura during the plague epidemic, being barred from entering and subsequently going to the village of Krishnapura must have taken place in the parts of the Sangama shown in this picture.

12. The River Lokapavani at the foot of Karighatta hillock near Srirangapattana

The picture below is that of the bathing ghats of the river Lokapavani as it looks today. The ancient bathing ghats are under renovation.

The river Lokapavani is a tributary of the river Kaveri collecting rainwater from the ancient pond irrigation water systems network across nearby hills and villages in Mandya district and carrying it to the Kaveri River. The ancient derelict structures seen on the banks are the relics of traditional mantapas (open resting shelter with a roof) that were built by the rulers on banks of rivers for the convenience of pilgrims to rest at night, bathe in the river and for women to change their clothes after bathing in the river. During the time when Rangappa carried pots of water from the river to the temple, there were granite stone steps instead of the wide concrete steps that are being built now to replace them. I have bathed in this river at this spot a number of times when my father brought our family from Mysore to visit the Karighatta temple.

An interesting annecdote:
When I was growing up in Mysore, I would often overhear

two housewives, especially from iyengar families exchanging mundane daily news. One would ask, "What is for food today at your house?". The other would answer, "Karighatta and Lokapavani". What she meant was that she had cooked a simple meal of rice and watery lentil soup called saru. However, this was an excellent example of how this popular river and shrine had impacted on a creative way of representing a simple fare, thus saving the embarassment to the women.

Some pictures from the Karighatta hillock and temple with appropriate footnotes are shown in the next couple of pages.

12(a). Steps leading to the temple

Karighatta is a name derived from folklore because from a distance, the hillock looks black. In Kannada, Kari means black and Ghatta means a small hill. Hence the name Karighatta. The pictures below show the starting and ending points of the refurbished steps to climb up the Karighatta . There are between 250 and 300 steps to climb up from the river to the top of the hill. When I took these photographs, I drove up the hill on a decent road in my car. However, during Rangappa's times, people had to walk up steps that were uneven, narrow and less than five feet wide. I know it because I have climbed up the ancient steps when I was young.

12(b). The main entrance to Karighatta Srinivasa Swamy temple

This is the modern day entrance to Krighatta Srinivasa Swamy temple. You can see the original entrance door from ancient times inside the picture. Perhaps, Sosale Rangappa collected pots of water, walked up the steps, entered through the ancient door here and delivered the water pots to the original kitchen which was to the left of the forecourt as he entered the temple area. As per the story written by my father, as there was no well on the hillock, during the temple's annual festival, Rangappa made forty to fifty trips up and down the hillock supplying water to the kitchen and for the temple rituals. When he was young and well to do, he did this as a service. Later, when poverty set in, he did this to earn few precious coins to feed the family.

12(c). The door to the temple kitchen and the forecourt

The pictures below show the inner courtyard and the locked door to the entrance to the kitchen at Srinivasa Swamy temple in Karighatta that was in use during Rangappa's time. This kitchen was closed down in late 1990's perhaps, after the road was built. This would have been the general area where the anecdote of Sosale Rangappa teaching a lesson in manners and politeness to the arrogant pilgrim must have taken place.

13. The main street in Kalkuni village

The photograph above shows the current day picture of the then main street at Kalkuni village where Rangappa's friend Peer Saheb lived. Obviously, there have been many changes to the buildings and the street over the century. None of the buidings from late 1890's and early 1900's remain.

14. The Muguru Adda Halla

The picture below shows the addahalla at Muguru; the probable place where Sosale Rangappa would have helped move a bullock cart loaded with packs of Jaggery cubes that was stuck in the quagmire.

In Kannada, an addahalla describes a dip in the road going across a stream that facilitates water flow over the road. This was a very common sight on rural roads almost until 1950's when bridges were built to replace the dips. Except for some farm traffic, the main traffic on this road today travels over a bridge built in the 1950's. However, a refurbished mud road over the addahalla still exists for the use of farmers who own land around the stream.

It is a matter of luck that the original causeway where Rangappa's adventure took place still exists, albeit for other purposes.

15. Kutta Iyengar's house

This is the picture of a part of a huge house belonging to Shri Kutta Iyengar, a relative and close friend to Sosale Rangappa in the village of Komaranapura, about 50 kilometres from Sosale. When Kutta Iyengar's mother died, Rangappa had carried a huge urn of water from the river Kaveri from Sosale to Komaranapura to perform the pre cremation rites. During his last days, when dementia set in, Rangappa remembered only Kutta Iyengar, his close friend and no one else.
Kutta Iyengar was a very well to do landowner and had a huge house covering a large area. Over a century, the lands and the house are partitioned among his descendants. You can see a part of the old dwellings to the left of the picture. Perhaps this was a part of the original house before partition.

16. Devirammanni Agrahara in Mysore

The picture below was taken in June 2025 and shows the current day Devirammanni Agrahara in Mysore about 500m away from the Varaha gate of the Mysore palace precincts.

After the demise of his wife Kalyanamma, at the insistence of his mother in law Lakshamma, Sosale Rangappa moved his family to this street in Mysore around 1910. As time went by, children moved out one by one after marriage or after completing their education etc. However, my father Sosale Rajagopala Iyengar lived here with his family until 1945 or 1946 when he moved to his ancestral house in Devamba Agrahara.

Devirammanni Agrahara is in a way a unique 80 m to 100m long old street in Mysore established in the second half of the 19th century by the then maharaja's administration as a part of modernising the city and establishing dwelling places for workers and minor functionaries associated with the palace. Traditionally, the name Agrahara is associated with a street of houses in a city or a village given as gifts/largesse by the reigning king to various people recognising their services to the throne. My grandfather Sosale Rangappa moved into this street after buying a house from one of the residents. At that time, the electric light pole and the houses on the right near side of the picture were a part of the royal stables for

maintaining the cavalry horses on daily duty at the palace. By the time I started visiting this street from about 1955 to 1969, the stables were converted to houses.

The street today has no resemblance to the one I used to visit in my childhood until 1970's or to the one where my uncles and aunts grew up. I have a vivid memory of this street as I was a regular weekly visitor to my uncle's house.

Those days, the street had a common tiled roof covered with country tiles above rows of houses on either side of a 50ft wide street, each house sharing its walls with the neighbours. There was a common open veranda running along the entire length on each side in front of the houses interspersed with steps leading from the street level to each house. The verandas were like a broad 20ft to 25ft floored path with the walls of the houses on one side and a line of pillars adorning the other side making it look like an avenue of sorts. As children, we used to run from one end of the street, along the veranda to the other end, jumping over gaps or running over the steps. The common verandas on both sides also acted as common community area for the residents for social gatherings, lunches, celebrations, and for watching processions of the idol of Ganapathi from the temple and other festival events. Unfortunately, I could not get any pictures of the old Devirammanni Agrahara of my childhood. To my mind, the long veranda was simply beautiful and an all-weather play area.

As evident from the picture, during the latter half of the 20th century and in early 21st century, most of the old houses including my grandfather's house have been demolished and replaced by flats. During my last visit in June 2025, I saw just two of the old houses remaining and they too had built walls to enclose the previously open veranda. I have included below, photographs of some of the houses on Devirammanni Agrahara, as they are seen today, of those houses that are mentioned in Sosale Rangappa's story.

16(a). Rangappa's house

On the site on which the block of flats in the picture below stand, was the original family home of Sosale Rangappa in Mysore. After his demise, his eldest surviving son Rangaswamy Iyengar inherited this house.

His decendants who inherited the house from their father have demolished the house built by their father and have built flats to share among themselves. (picture at the top of next page)

16(b). Court Jester scholar Lakshmi Pati Shastry's house

The house towards the right of the picture below with purple steps and a closed wooden door is the location where the court jester vidwan (meaning scholar) Lakshmipathy Shastry's house stood. His house included the white house in the picture.

The well from which Sosale Rangappa saved Lakshmipathy Shastry's son from drowning was at the back courtyard of this house.

16(c). Ghata vidwan Shyamarao's house

The house in the picture below is the 4th house from Sosale Rangappa's house. A professional musician Shyamarao, a player of the musical instrument made from clay called Ghata which is an accompanying rhythm drum to Carnatic classical music lived in a house on this piece of land where the house in the picture stands.

Sosale Rangappa saved Shyamarao's wife from drowning in the well at the back of this house.

17. Venkataramanaswamy temple in Vontikoppal

The picture below is the entrance to the Venkataramanaswamy temple in Vontikoppal, Mysore. Sosale Rangappa was the pivotal figure in transporting the main idol, pillars and other temple artefacts from a derelict temple near Melkote to Mysore. He also helped in consecrating the idol of the Principal deity in the sanctum sanctorum of this temple.

Image courtesy Instagram
Web link: https://images.app.goo.gl/Nan2UnfK14cifxJb6

18. Krishnapura Village

The photographs below show the river Kaveri near the village of Krishnapura and the main entrance to the venugopalaswamy temple in the village.

As per the story of Sosale Rangappa, during the plague in early 1900's, he came by boat with his family to live in this village, rowing singlehandedly a distance of 14km, after he was refused entry into Tirumakudalu Narasipura.

Children of Sosale Rangappa

Sosale Narayana Iyengar

Eldest son

Passed away early 1900s

No photo

Sosale Rangaswamy Iyengar

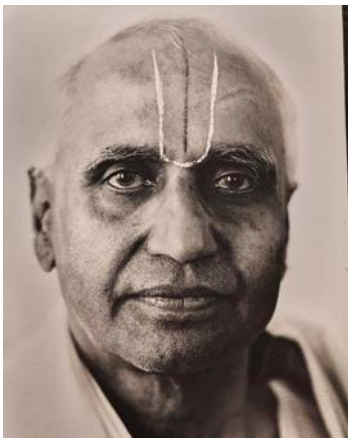
Sosale Gopalakrishna Iyengar

Janakamma

Eldest daughter

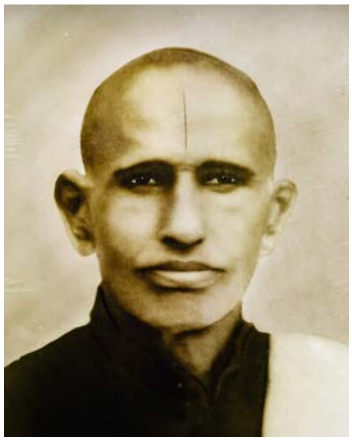
No photo avaliable

Sosale Srirangachar



Tirumalai Sosale Krishna Iyengar

Rukminamma



Sosale Rajagopala Iyengar

Sosale Sundararaja Iyengar

Explanatory note on pictures of children of Sosale Rangappa

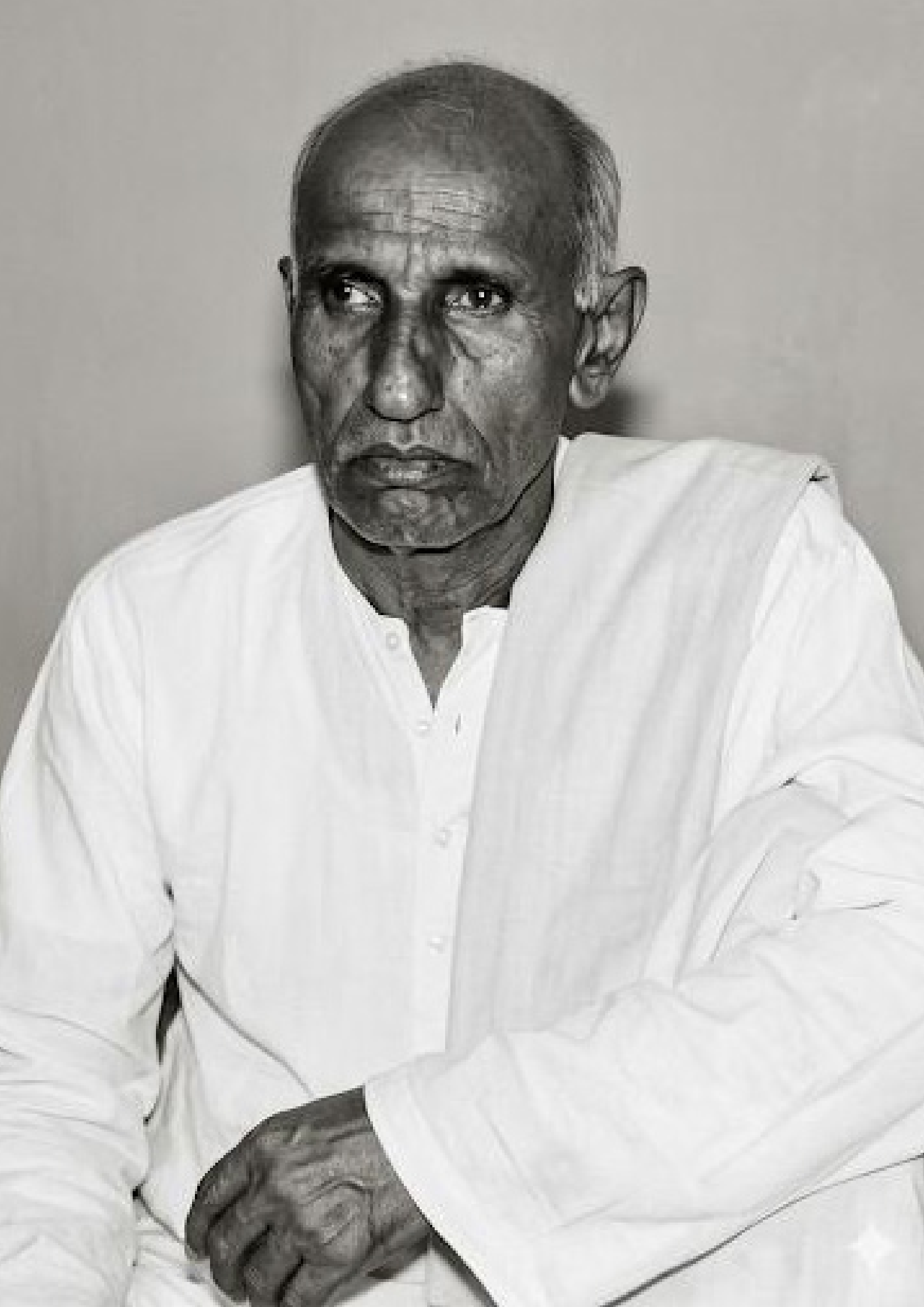
As Far As I am Aware, The names and photos of the people in the previous page are those of the children of Sri Sosale Rangappa.

Sosale Rangappa lived between 1866 and 1939 inclusive. His photographs are not available partly due to lack of technology those days and mostly due to lack of financial ability to get a portrait painted.

The eldest son Shi Sosale Narayana Iyengar(Thatappa), who was saved from the floods by his father Sosale Rangappa died in an epidemic in early 1900's.

Janakamma lost her husband in early 1940's . I presume that because of the customs of the then Brahmin Iyengar community, as a widow, she would not have participated actively in any of the family weddings, celebrations and any wedding photographs. I have not been able to find a single picture of my Aunt(dodda atte) Smt. Janakamma.

The picture of Sri Rangaswamy Iyengar was extracted from a group photo taken in late 1950's and is displayed in the Sosale temple. Despite extensive search, I have not been able to source a better picture of this uncle (Dodda doddappa) of mine.



Remembering my father

SOSALE RAJAGOPALA IYENGAR

Written by Sosale Mohana

FOREWORD

Credit : Dr. N.R. Narayana Murthy, Padma Vibhushan
(Founder ; Infosys)

I am very grateful to Sri Sosale Mohana for this opportunity to write a foreword for the biography of his much-revered father and my much-respected teacher, Sri Rajagopala Iyengar (SR). SR was one of the most popular teachers of Sarada Vilas High School (SVHS) – Mysuru during the 1960s. I must congratulate Sri Mohana on writing a riveting biography of our beloved teacher in a style that makes it unputdownable.

I was a student of SVHS for my tenth and eleventh (SSLC) grades during the period September 1959 – March 1961. My father had been transferred from Madhugiri to Mysuru in 1959. My father was told by his friends that SVHS was the best high school in the city during the 1960s. My father took me to Sri K V Narayan, perhaps the finest high school headmaster of all times in Mysuru.

I did not have the privilege of being taught by SR in the 10th grade, but was very lucky to have been taught English by him during my SSLC year (11th grade) during June 1960 – March 1961.

SR was a tall and impressive personality with his high-quality English, his impeccable diction, and his deep knowledge of English grammar. When this personality walked into the C section (English medium section) of the 11th grade, the usually noisy students would be forced into pin-drop silence. When SR opened his mouth, every student would be mesmerized and listened to SR with rapt attention. Every student was curious to listen to him since his knowledge of English language, his inexhaustible English vocabulary and his vast knowledge of rules of English grammar were clearly the best among our teachers. No wonder that his admirers, including me, called him, the Wren and Martin of Mysuru of the sixties. Thanks to SR, every one of us acquired a copy of the famous English grammar book written in 1935 by

Wren and Martin. The only disagreement among his admirers was whether he was Mr. Wren or whether he was Mr. Martin! We settled it amicably in SR-style by calling him Mr. Wren since Mr. Wren was the first author of the book!

I have fond memories of SR's humor. I once used the phrase, "The God" in answering one of his questions in the class. The perfectionist in him was somewhat uncomfortable. He gently corrected me that I should simply say God and not "The God". Me being me, I answered him that I was a monotheist! He burst out laughing with me and told me that I would become a good lawyer. He also wished me well in the ensuing SSLC examination.

His words proved to be prophetic! I obtained the 4th rank for the state in SSLC examination in 1961. The first two teachers that I met after our results were announced were KVN (K V Narayan, a superhuman teacher of Chemistry and our most-respected headmaster) and SR. I still remember SR's words that day. He said smilingly and encouragingly that there were still three more steps to climb, and that higher aspiration, humility, hard work and discipline would be the steps required to climb to go to the top. These attributes have been very useful for me in my career. When I obtained the 3rd rank in Pre-University for the Mysuru University, I met him again. He had a roaring laughter and asked why I missed two steps! KVN and SR have had a huge influence on me till today. SR was a stoic-philosopher who often repeated the sentence, "Do not be egoistic. Your little world might stop, but life goes on".
SR was unique in teaching English essays. He would adjust his voice, his tone and his diction to make us, the students, feel that we were in the presence of Shakespeare, Wordsworth and Jerome K Jerome. He would pause to point out the special points of English grammar in the essay.

Even now, from time to time, I open my laptop to look at the picture of the SSLC class of 1961. Fond memories and much gratitude come when I see a set of extraordinary teachers including affable and encouraging SR, and the most-respected

KVN. I am positive that my favorite English teacher is waiting in heaven for me to start his next English class!

Narayana Murthy

Bangalore
12-05-2025

CHAPTER 1

Introduction to the complex world of names for various relatives in an Indian family.

Before I attempt to write about my father, I feel it is appropriate to give brief explanation of specific names for specific relatives as per the South Indian Iyengar families from Karnataka in Tamil and Kannada traditions.

Out of necessity and trying to stay true to my memory, I have used these names and the common relationship names like uncle, aunt and cousin from the British culture too.

Unlike the words 'cousin, uncle, aunt' from the British culture that encompass a whole plethora of relations in any family circle, in Indian family circles, there are many clear common names that automatically highlight and identify a majority of relations in the extended family structure.

I am not an expert in all these different common names of relationships within the larger family context. I have given below some of the ones I know.

The reader might be wondering why I quote such common names in both Tamil and Kannada. This is because of two factors.

Firstly I was born and brought up in Karnataka. My first language therefore is Kannada. I have excellent

communication skills in Kannada, both verbal and written.

Secondly, I was born into the Iyengar sect of brahmins who originally hailed from Tamilnadu and thus my mother tongue is supposed to be Tamil. To be honest, I can only speak tolerably horrible Tamil as per my friends and relatives from Tamilnadu. I understand conversational Tamil quite well.

However, I can neither read nor write in Tamil.

Here are some examples of common names used to describe specific relations in the larger context of a family.

Father is generally Appa and mother is Amma in both Tamil and Kannada. In my father's family, father was addressed as Anna in Tamil which could also mean elder brother in both Kannada and Tamil.

A son is called payyan or magan (pronounced mahan) in Tamil and maga in Kannada.

A daughter is called ponnu or Magalh (pronounced mahalh) in Tamil and magalhu in Kannada.

Elder brother is Anna and elder sister is Akka in both Tamil and Kannada.

Younger brother is thambi in Tamil and thamma in Kannada,whereas a younger sister is thangai or thangacchi in Tamil and thangi in Kannada.

Chitya in Tamil or Chikkappa in Kannada generally means father's younger brother. Their spouses would be called chitthi and chikkamma in Tamil and Kannada respectively. The same names are used for one's mother's younger sister and her spouse. However, in verbal communications, it is customary to clarify how the relation is defined.

Likewise, father's elder brother is periya or periyappa in

Tamil and doddappa in Kannada and their spouse would be periyamma in Tamil or doddamma in Kannada. A similar custom as before is used to clarify how the relation is defined.

For example, my Sriranga Periya's (father's elder brother Sriranga's) wife would be Sriranga periyamma instead of her actual name as Rajalakshmi periyamma. Likewise, my chikkamma Jaya's (my mother's younger sister Jaya's husband) would be my Jaya chikkappa, my chikkamma Jaya's husband. I am sure you have noticed the unintentional introduction to the customs of a patriarchal society.

Every sibling of both parents are clearly identified using a pre-set pattern of communication which is in practice for centuries.

Mother's brother is mama in Tamil or sodara mava in Kannada and his wife would be mami in Tamil or sodaratthe in Kannada.

Father's sister would be atthe in Tamil and sodaratthe in Kannada. Her husband would be athimber in Tamil and Bhava or Mava (not Sodara Mava) in Kannada.

As before, when one says in Kannada, my atthe, one will clarify as atthe, one's mother's brother sodaramava's wife or sodaratthe, one's father's sister.

One's father's brother's children and one's mother's sister's children are identified using the same common names, for brothers; Anna, thamma, and for sisters; akka, thangi in Kannada or their equivalent in Tamil. However, the basis of the relation as to its origin being on one's mother's side or father's side is clarified in conversations.

For example, when referring to my elder cousin Jayanthi, I would say Jayanthi is my Akka, my periyappa's or doddappa's daughter. The fact I use periyappa or doddappa instead of periyamma or doddamma is a clarification that she is related

to me from my father's family.

Likewise my late cousin E Raghavan is my thambi or thamma, my chitthi or chikkamma's son. The words chitthi or chikkamma indicates that he is my relative from my mother's side of the family .

All children of one's father's sister or mother's brother are identified by their parents' primary relation to one self; In Kannada, mother's brother's daughter would be mama's daughter or sodara mava's daughter, once again the stress being on mama or mava, mother's brother. Likewise, father's sisters son would be atthe's or sodaratthe's son, again the operative word is atthe indicating father's sister. However, in Tamil, one's mother's brother's son would be Ammanji and his sister would be Ammanga. Likewise one's father's sister's son would be atthan and his sister would be atthanga.

I do not wish to get into the complexities of defining the common names used for relatives by marriage. Enough is enough. It is mind boggling.

It sounds pretty complicated for someone outside of the Indian culture. Since children in India grow up with the usage of such distinctions, it is simple and straightforward to them.

Back to memories of Sosale Rajagopala Iyengar, my father and mentor

I decided to write these memories of my father because I wanted to record anecdotes and events that demonstrated how my father was an inspiration to others. He was the Primary sphere of influence that shaped my life, values, outlook and commitment.

I never saw my paternal grandfather or grandmother. They were dead and gone before I was born. However, my paternal grandfather Sri Sosale Rangappa was a legend in his times. When the family celebrated his centennial birth anniversary in

1966, my father wrote his life story, adventures and exploits in Kannada and published it.

My childhood friend Dr. Krishnamurthy Chandar, a well known professor of English and a modern day popular author of stories in both Kannada and English has kindly translated the book written by my father into English.

Dr. Krishnamurthy Chandar has also generously translated this book into Kannada. Thus, I plan to publish two versions, one each in English and in Kannada, the life stories of two legends from our Sosale family; ***my grandfather Sosale Rangappa and my farther Sosale Rajagopala Iyengar***.

I grew up listening to my father telling me anecdotes and stories from my grandfather's life. I have experienced life with my father for the first 25 years of my existence and had ample opportunities to observe and learn from him. I have seen the respect, love and adoration my father commanded from his students. I have also observed the close family bonds that he nurtured and developed among his siblings, their children and grandchildren. I personally feel that owe it to my father to celebrate and publicise his life and that of his father for future generations.

While the story of my grandfather in Kannada is copied verbatim from my father's original book, I hope I have given a true account of my father's life without exaggeration.

CHAPTER 2

Sosale Rajagopala Iyengar, the great teacher

My father had a great positive influence in my upbringing. Like every other person, I am fortunate to have had a great father who was one of the best dads in the world.

I am aware that every son and daughter says the same about their father and it is always the truth in their lives. For each one of us, our dad is the best. I can never dispute that.

In addition to being the best mentor and father to me, Sosale Rajagopala Iyengar, popularly known by his initials as SR, as was the custom in recognising teachers by their initials in schools until almost the year 2000, was a legend as a teacher of English, History and Geography. He had a degree in arts and a teaching degree. He joined Saradavilas high school in Mysore as a teacher in mid to late 1920's and retired in 1969 after serving the same institution for over 40 years.

He could have joined government service where he could have earned considerably more money and promotions. He declined this because such a job would be transferable and he did not wish to leave Mysore because of certain commitments. You will read about these commitments later in this write up. He could have got into other popular private high schools in the city. However, those days, Saradavilas high school was known for its academic excellence and he wished to be a part of it in addition to a sense of a loyalty to serve his Alma mater.

Teaching was his vocation. He was an embodiment of a great teacher. He was very well read in English, Kannada and

Sanskrit literature. He could transform an ordinary lesson in English poetry or drama into an enchanting experience.

I was his student as well. Even today I am moved when I recall his lesson on Matthew Arnold's epic poem, 'Sohrab and Rustom'. When SR, during the lessons, dramatized the last scene when Sohrab, on his last breath, reveals that he is Rustom's son and confirms the truth with the words, "truth sits upon the lips of dying men", he dramatized the anguish and sorrow of Rustom the father who unknowingly had mortally wounded his own son Sohrab, so beautifully and realistically that the whole class experienced Rustom's sorrow and suffering . I am sure that there were quite a few tearful eyes among the students in the class that day.

He was a fund of knowledge in history. His lessons in Indian history, be it of the Mughal period or that of the British rule or that of ancient India, were absorbing and informative lessons that vividly portrayed the events with an evenly balanced opinion. His narration would be so picturesque that students would relive the history in their imagination.

One must realise that even after the Independence in 1947, for over fifteen years, our history books still faithfully repeated the history as recorded and written by British historians. I still remember reading the first meaningful struggle for Indian independence in our history text book of that time as the 'Sepoy mutiny of 1857' instead of what my father reiterated and stressed as the 'first war of Indian independence's. He was a nationalist and a great patriot. He was able to analyse the causes of each conflict covered by the history books providing his students with a clear unbiased view of the reasons and the consequences.

Eminent people like Padma Vibhushan Dr. N R Narayana Murthy, the founder of Infosys, Padmabhushan Dr. S. L. Byrappa , the well-known literary figure in Kannada literature and many others were his students at Saradavilas High school.

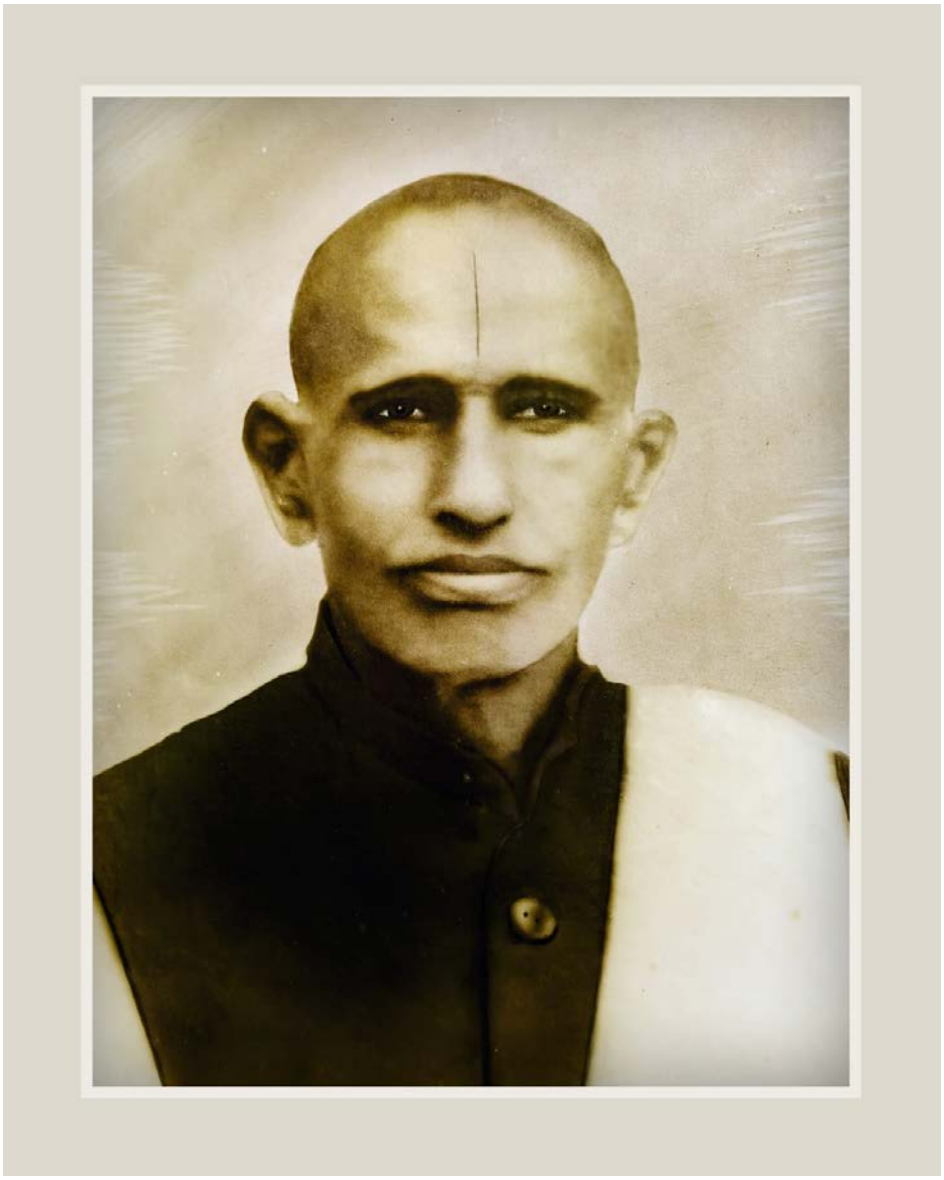
My father became the headmaster in the school academic year 1966-67 when he turned 60. However, because the retirement age was 60, he had applied for an extension. He had to stay home at half salary for almost six months in the latter half of 1967 before the extension was granted and he was reinstated as the headmaster. He suffered the first of his five heart attacks in 1969 and decided to retire.
In light of this, the last batch of students he would have taught would have been that of 1965-66. It was difficult for me to locate his former students after five decades or more. I was successful in meeting few of his students.
I met Padmabhushan Dr. S. L. Bhyrappa in late November 2024 at his residence in Mysore to get any anecdotes he might remember from his school days as my father's student. I had read in his autobiographical book "bhitti" where he has written about my father as his teacher. During my meeting with this pillar of modern Kannada literature, he recalled an incident. He remembered the history lessons of my father wherein he would deliver the lesson that would give an insight into historical analysis and interpretation that would be expected of a professor at University level. Dr. Bhyrappa remembered my father's abundant knowledge of history.

Dr. Bhyrappa mentioned that during his high school education, he was good at debate and had won a number of inter school competitions. One day, my father called him and said, " you have great oratory and public speaking skills. However, you do not have the depth of reading and knowledge to excel". He then asked him to come to Maharajas College where undergraduate and postgraduate courses for Mysore University were taught by great professors and orators. I understand that my father talked to him about these and said, " these persons are effective speakers mainly because their oratory is ably supported by their abundant knowledge". When Dr Bhyrappa asked my father as to what he should do, my father got him a number of books on history from the oriental library thereby triggering the interest in him about history and literature. Dr Bhyrappa did mention that the depth of historical research in his writings

as depicted in his books reflected the early influence of my father's guidance.

He also remembered fondly, my father arriving in style at the school gates in a tonga(a traditional single horse carriage unique to old Mysore), a tall dark handsome man, with the traditional Iyengar symbol of nama on his forehead (a single vertical red vermillion strand painted on one's forehead identifying one as an Iyengar; follower of the vaishnava philosophy of vishishtadwaita) dressed in a white dhoti, white kurta and a black khadi woolen waist coat.

This image of my father is the one most of his students remember.



I met Padma Vibhushan Dr. N R. Narayana Murthy, the founder of the IT giant company Infosys on 22nd January 2025. He is well known in India and abroad as one among the greatest of entrepreneurs, and a philanthropist. It was very considerate of him to invite, at his own initiative, a couple of his classmates from Saradavilas High School to join our meeting online via a video conference call.

He had invited Dr. R. Chandrasekhar, who studied engineering in one of the then famous five prestigious institutions for engineering in India known as the IIT (Indian institute of technology). He did his doctorate in metallurgy from the Indian institute of Science and later became a professor at that institution. He had also invited Prof. K.G. Prabhakar who retired as the Principal of MES College in Bangalore and all these completed their SSLC in 1961 from Saradavilas High School and were taught by my father. I also had the opportunity to touch base with my classmate Mr. Chandramohan who happened to be a friend of Mr. Prabhakar and had come along with him for the video conference. While the others completed their entire High School studies at Saradavilas High School, Dr. Narayana Murthy joined the school in 1960 in the final year of the SSLC course. My father taught them English in SSLC and civics and Geography in the earlier years.

Dr Narayana Murthy recollected that as he was a new student who joined in the final year, my father didn't take much notice of him until the first class test in English. Dr. Narayana Murthy scored the highest marks in that test. He had committed just two errors in Grammar, one was using the definite article before the word God as "the God" and the other was in using the wrong proposition "to" instead of "after" while filling in the blanks in the sentence, "The child takes _____ the father". My father from then on nick named him "the God" Narayana Murthy and started taking interest in his progress .

There were a couple of bright students in that year's SSLC batch when Dr. Narayana Murthy was in his SSLC class.

Everyone except for some of Dr. Narayana Murthy's close friends expected one Mr Harish Patel to attain the best student award and a state rank in the SSLC examination. However, Dr. Narayana Murthy's friends were confident of a surprise from him. When the SSLC examination results were published, Dr Narayana Murthy had secured the best result in the school and the 4th overall rank in the entire state in the SSLC examinatios. He recollected that my father called him over during the felicitations function for high achievers and congratulated him. His parting advice to Dr. Narayana Murthy was, " you have done very well to achieve this result. However, there are harder tests and examinations ahead of you in your education and in your life. So keep working hard, be humble and do not allow this achievement to get into your head (This is a typically Indian sentiment which means that the achievement should not make one become proud and overconfident). Dr. Narayana Murthy remembered this advice even after nearly six decades and he mentioned that he had followed the spirit of this advice throughout his life.

Both Dr R. Chandrasekhar and Prof. Prabhakar fondly remembered my father's lesson in History, Geography and civics in their earlier years at Saradavilas High School. They recalled how he expected his students to understand their duties as citizens and follow the social and cultural values he taught as a part of the course in civics.

As far as I can remember, most of the students those days (1950-1970 and perhaps later too)studied until the end of Primary education in schools where the medium of instruction was Kannada. About a third of these , once again students like Dr. N R Narayana Murthy, Dr. R. Chandrasekhar, Prof. K.G.Prabhakar, Chandramohan, and myself included, opted to study the high school course in English medium as it was then known. In Saradavilas High School, section C in all the year groups 9,10 and 11 were designated as English medium classes meaning the medium of instruction was in English.

Dr. R. Chandrasekhar remembered my father's lessons in English and particularly in English grammar. As was generally the case in those days, students switching from Kannada medium to English medium initially struggled to cope with learning all subjects in English language. He recalled that my father was well versed the famous book on English grammar written by Wren and Martin and used it as the main resource to teach English grammar. He fondly remembered how my father guided and encouraged such students to speak in English so much so that by the time they left school at the end of their high school course, the pupils were very confident in speaking in English with grammatically correct structure and usage. When Dr. R. Chandrasekhar joined IIT, a number his class mates were from elite schools in the country. These students could converse in English with confidence and ease. Dr. R. Chandrasekhar mentioned that thanks to my father, he was able to interact with them in English confidently; yet another recognition of my father's greatness as a teacher.

Professor Prabhakar had similar thoughts and memories of my father as a teacher. He remembered my father's lessons fondly. He recalled how my father's lessons in civics instilled in them a sense of national pride and duty as a citizen. He also recalled how my father used a cocunut shell to describe the geography of earth by drawing lines on it. He felt that perhaps his decision to become a teacher in later life was unconciously motivated by my father's lessons as an inspiring teacher.

Mr Chandra Mohan while agreeing with others about their memories added that in addition to my father's outstanding lessons in English and History, he remembered his personality. He recalled that SR was a tall, lean and fit individual adorned in a traditional attier of white dhoti, kurta and a black waist-coat. He also remembered my father arriving in school by a tonga: this image is the one most of his students remember.

Recognition at National level:

It is a tribute to my father's ecellence as a teacher that he was invited to attend two work shops at all India level, one in Delhi and another one in Bhopal, to frame guidelines for National syllabus in Social Studies. He contributed significantly and constructively at each of the meetings.

I have given below a brief account of his two visits as above and two anecdotes related to his trip to Delhi.

SR travels to Delhi for his only visit.

Incidentally, he was the first among his siblings to leave the safe haven of Mysore and travel to Delhi and Bhopal. These two trips were highlights of his life. In his trip to Delhi, he got an opportunity to visit all the historical monuments in Delhi, Agra and Fatepur Sikhri, in addition to religious places of Mathura and Brindavan. He was very happy to see the places he had read about in Indian history and in the Bhagavatha. He was a great story teller and I recall spending hours every night listening to his verbal travelogue which to me was very exciting and interesting.
I have a vivid recollection of an incident that happened on my father’s only trip to Delhi in 1959.

A vegetarian’s nightmare in Delhi

I still chuckle when I remember one of his episodes of ordering a meal in a restaurant in Delhi. He would give a dramatic narration of this episode and a pantomime of this unusual and unexpected incident. It was both hilarious and heart warming. Here is a brief account of the episode.

My father had a rudimentary knowledge of spoken Hindi, picked up as a result of interaction with his Muslim friends.

When he went to Delhi, he was under the impression that he could easily communicate in Hindi. He went into a restaurant near Jamia mosque in old Delhi that had no menu board, presumed it to be a vegetarian restaurant and ordered chapati and dal in his Mysore urdu “roti aur sambar lao”. He did not know the difference between dal, sambar and sabji. Unfortunately, he did not realise that the restaurant served both vegetarian and meat dishes.

When his food was served, the gentleman sharing his table was served his order at the same time. The other person’s order was for chicken curry on the bone and chapatis. Imagine my father’s shock at seeing a dead chicken cooked and served on the table he was sitting at. Here was a staunch South Indian vegetarian Brahmin man who never touched an egg or even a live chicken in his life, sharing a table with a person eating chicken curry. He had never seen a bowl of chicken curry on the bone in his life.

When my father told me about this incident, the mono acting of his table mate digging into the dead chicken accompanied by his own aghast facial expression at seeing a man eating a dish of cooked chicken was a rare treat of genius in the art of story telling.
He told me that he could not bring himself to share the same table with the other gentleman. He left his meal untouched and ran out. I can understand his reaction. I am not sure whether he paid the bill or was chased by the hotel guys.

He did tell me that he could not eat a proper meal in peace for the next couple of days as he would see a piece of chicken on bone every time he thought of a meal.

Incidentally, at the NCERT workshops, they did serve vegetarian and non vegetarian meals in separate serving counters. While he had the flexibility to accept this, he told me that he would look out for tables where only vegetarians ate their meals and would join them.

My first and last attempt to enrich the English dictionary.

The second incident associated with my father's trip to Delhi involves me and is very funny as I invented a new word to be included in the English dictionary. Unfortunately, this glory was short-lived and I was excluded from the hall of fame within a couple of hours of coining a new word.

Here is the incident:
On his return from Delhi, my father had bought a box of the famous Ghantawala sweets, which everyone who went to Delhi those days brought or talked about. It was a colourful cardboard box with the name of the company, it's logo and in one corner was the printed information of its long history with the words Estd 1836, I think. I am not sure of the year. My father had also bought me a coarse wool cardigan, the first ever cardigan in my life.

As any youngster would, I wanted to show off my new cardigan. So, I wore the cardigan that was suited for the cold weather of single digit temperatures of Delhi, in the 29 plus heat of Mysore city in late March and went to meet my friend Sampathu. As a token of my friendship, I also stole a small piece of sweet to take to my dearest friend. I met him in the evening, gave him the piece of stolen Indian sweet or mithai, and proudly exhibited my abundant knowledge of Ghantawala sweets which he had not even heard of. With great assurance I said, " Did you know this sweet is from Ghantawala sweets of Delhi. It came in their box which says the company Easted in 1836".

He looked at me with incredulity and said "Easted?"

I said, "yes, it says estd 1836 on the box which means easted" looking at him as though he was an idiot not to understand such a simple expression.

My logic was that since the Sun rises in the east, estd

would be the short form of easted meaning opened. To my uncluttered mind, east was a verb with past tense easted.

Sampathu could not control his mirth at my stupidity. He said with great sympathy at my ignorance and in a tone reserved for an intellectually inferior person, he said, “muttala (meaning idiot), it is not easted. There is no such word. It means established”. Believe me! I have not forgotten that lesson. Any time I see a billboard of a shop with estd, I smile!

Rajagopala Iyengar travels to Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh

On his second trip, my father went to Bhopal for the national framework meeting. He utilised this visit to fulfil yet another wish of seeing Sanchi, the seat of Buddhism. He admired Buddha for his teachings and always considered Buddha to be the 9th incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Buddha to him was the embodiment of love and kindness. The visit to Sanchi and his interaction with some monks there had left a profound and lasting impression on him.

I am not quite sure. But, I vaguely remember that he went to the city of Jhansi as well to pay his respects to one of the great freedom fighters from India’s first war of independence, “Rani Lakshmi Bai, the erstwhile queen of Jhansi” who was one of his idols.

Recognition by the state government

Even though my father served the society and his pupils without any expectations or rewards, his services were recognized and honoured by the Government of Karnataka: the state award for long and meritorious service as a teacher.

GOVERNMENT OF MYSORE

Department of Public Instruction

This **State Award** is given to

Shri S. Rajagopala Iyengar

Assistant Master, Sharada Vilas High School, Mysore.

in recognition of his long and meritorious service as a Teacher.

Director
Public Instruction

Secretary
Education Department

Bangalore, dated 24th April 1967

CHAPTER 3

Sosale Rajagopala Iyengar, the scholar with principles

Even though he just had a bachelor's degree in History and English and was a high school teacher, my father was a highly learned scholar in History, English and Kannada. He was well versed in Sanskrit as well. From the time I was a young boy until we left Mysore in late 1960's, he used to privately tutor undergraduate students in English and History. Two of my cousins who did their masters in History and in Kannada remember my father guiding them in preparing their essays, presentations and dissertations. Here is an anecdote that showed another facet of his personality as a scholar and a staunch nationalist.

My father used to tutor the daughter of an Arasu family in Mysore, a first cousin to the then Maharaja of Mysore, helping her Prepare for her final BA examinations in History and English.

To the Mysorean in me, the correct word for such a family should be Arasu family, Arasu meaning King or royal lineage in Kannada instead of the anglicized Urs. I digress. Sorry! The Arasu families followed the traditional purdah system which prevented women of their families from being seen in public without a veil. My father used to go to the their family bungalow a couple of evenings every week to tutor the girl.

I cannot remember the year, perhaps in late 1950's, on a Sunday in January, a car with the royal crest of the Maharaja of Mysore arrived near my house. The Maharaja's ADC(Aide De' Camp) came to our house and respectfully addressed my father. He said, "Sir, His Majesty has requested your help as

a tutor to prepare the princess for her final BA examinations. We can make arrangements for your travel to the palace to tutor the princess whenever you wish to".

My father was a staunch nationalist and a Gandhian. He had participated in political rallies and meetings organised in connection with the country's struggle for freedom. As a young man, my father was highly impressed by Gandhi, his ideals and his Swadeshi Movement. Until India got her Independence in 1947, he was wearing only khadi garments. He disliked the Maharajas of Mysore mainly because they were servants of the British Raj: successive Maharajas of Mysore continuing to rule the Mysore kingdom under British patronage and paying Royalty to the British Government for their support and protection. Additionally, he disliked the Maharajas of Mysore because they conspired with the British to defeat Tipu Sultan, the first Indian king to openly oppose the British rule in South India. Tipu's father had usurped the throne from the Mysore kings and they sided with the British to regain their lost crown.

While my father appreciated the richness and the beauty of the English language and its literature, he disliked the British for subjugating India into slavery and for their looting of India.

Admittedly, at the time when this request came, India was an independent sovereign state for over a decade and the Maharaja of Mysore had lost his rule as a king and had been a Governor of Mysore state. But, my father's sentiments against the royal family of Mysore had not changed and he did not want to go to the palace at the request of the Maharaja.

At the same time, being a teacher, it was against his principles to say no to helping a pupil. All these thoughts must have come to him at that time and in a flash he found a perfect solution that preserved both his principles and his pride. He very politely replied to the ADC, " I am more than happy to help the princess. However, I am the Guru (teacher) and

the princess is the shishye (a female student). In our culture, Shishyas (students) go to Guru's house for learning and not the other way. Please inform the Maharaja that if his daughter can come to my house, I will teach her without any honorarium".

My father was fully aware that it would be impossible for the princess to come to our house to learn because of the purdah system for royal women. Paradoxically, he did not adopt the same principles when teaching the Maharaja's cousin's daughter. It was a very polite but, clear message to the Maharaja that he did not want to serve the royal family.

I could be wrong but, I have a vague recollection that the princess joined her cousin for some revision lessons nearer the examination time at her place where my father used to tutor her cousin. Neither my father nor the Maharaja acknowledged the help given by my father.

I used to tease my mother about this incident. I used to tell her, " If only my father had agreed to go to the palace and teach the princess as requested, he could have got an acre or two of land as gift from the Maharaja and today we would have been multi millionaires". Of course, my father had his pride and even if he were to go to the palace, he would not have accepted any payment, especially from the king of Mysore for tutoring his daughter.

I think these traits run in the family. My natural grandfather had rejected the award from the then Maharaja of Mysore who wanted to reward him for his selfless single handed act of saving 39 people from drowning in the floods. My father politely declined Maharaja's request.

To end this incident on a funny note:
My father was conversant with important decisions of the Government regarding former princely states. He predicted in early 1950's that the privy purses would be abolished and that the kings would be reduced to relative poverty. He had

a humorous way of explaining the effects of his prediction. Whenever one of his dhotis or kurtas was torn beyond repair and my mother Vaidehi wanted to throw it away or use it as a mop, he used to tell her, “Vaidehi, there will come a time in the near future when the Maharaja of Mysore will not have his palace or purse. Do not discard or give away things like these and keep them safe. I will gift them to the Maharaja of Mysore as he will need to be thrifty and can use these”.

CHAPTER 4

Sosale Rajagopala Iyengar, the amateur actor

My father was very keen on the theatre. He watched over and over again, all the plays put up by the famous Varadachar Drama Company. Those days, all plays were based on stories from Indian mythology like Ramayana, Bhakta Prahlada, Krishnavathara etc., and Kannada plays like Ratnavali, Sadarame, Manmatha Vijaya among others. My father had befriended the famous Kannada actor late Nagendra Rao when the latter was an actor with Varadachar company.

He was into acting as well and was a regular participant in amateur theatrical productions at the Town Hall in Mysore. His favourite role was that of Duryodhana which he termed Manadhana Suyodhana in the play Gadayuddha by the famous Kannada poet Ranna. I have also seen the play at the Town Hall in Mysore wherein he acted as Hiranya Kashipu in another mythological play.

At the time when my father was active in amateur theatrical productions, a new wave started in Kannada drama thanks to one of the highly celebrated creative playwrights of Kannada theatre Mr. T. P. Kailasam, fondly known to his admirers as TPK, a great humourist, satirist and a creative genius playwright.

Mr. Kailasam revolutionised the Kannada theatre with modern plays that had humour and a social theme, weaning the crowds away from the traditional mythological plays. My father was a disciple of TPK and spent many evenings at the den of Mr. Kailasam in Chamrajapuram in Mysore listening to his talks, discourses and dictation of various plays

which were copied by his disciples and admiring followers.

I remember a very important and exciting episode my father narrated to me that exemplifies his talent as an amateur actor.

One of TPK's very popular plays is titled " Bandavalavillada Badayi" (a simile to the saying empty vessels make most noise). The main character in this play is an advocate Ahobala Rao. Somewhere in 1930's , this play was staged in the Town Hall in Mysore by an amateur group. Mr. T P Kilasam himself was the chief guest for this performance. My father was in the leading role as Lawyer Ahobala Rao. I understand, at the end of the performance, TPK came on stage, hugged my father and announced that Raja (my father was popularly known among friends as Raja instead of Rajagopala Iyengar) had brought to life the character of Ahoblu as created by him at the time of writing the play and that his mythical lawyer Ahoblu had come alive in my father. Since that day Mr Kailasam addressed my father as Ahoblu.

I still recall seeing a post card from Early 1940's which my father had treasured which read, "My dear Ahoblu, please send me five rupees" signed T P Kailasam in his own handwriting. I remember asking my father about it. He replied, "even though I could ill afford it, I did send five rupees by money order to my great Guru".

It is my irreparable loss of a great family memento that we lost this post card when we moved home from Mysore to Davanagere in 1969. Also it was mainly carelessness and lack of awareness of my youth that I did not think of saving this post card at that time.

Thanks to my father's enthusiasm for drama, I had a very early introduction to the stage and public speaking. He was so keen on developing my interest in acting that from a young age of six years, he trained me in enacting scenes from Rannana Gadayuddha. I would perform the scene at the drop

of a hat whenever anyone asked me to. The scene I used to portray was a duel between Bhima and Duryodhana, two warriors from the epic story Mahabharata, who were the best in the use of the traditional Indian weapon of war called the gada (pronounced as in the first syllable of gum and the first syllable of 'that' joined together) or a mace.

Mace is a weapon with a long metal handle at one end and a heavy metal globe at the other end. Warriors bash each other like in a sword fight. But, the skills required are different as a mace would be quite heavy when compared to a sword. As I was enacting a duel of maces, I needed a prop that resembled a mace.

In those days almost every home kitchen had a wooden churner used in mashing boiled lentils or in churning curd to make buttermilk. This churner called matthu kolu, had a long wooden handle and a cylindrical head with ridges. I used this as a prop and enacted the whole scene of Gadayuddha reciting the verses and dialogues of both the warriors Bheema and Duryodhana. The entire performance was around 10 minutes. I stopped doing this when I entered high school and today, I cannot even remember a single line of any dialogue or verse.

My sister, Sriranga periya's daughter told me this anecdote. I understand she had gone with my father to Town Hall to watch him act in the famous kannada play Rannana gada Yuddha. During the play the spherical blob shaped head of one of the Gadas broke as it was a prop made from bamboo sticks. It would have been very difficult to continue the duel as it would be pretty embarrassing too. My father used great presence of mind to tell he is opponent that the duel with the maces was over and that they should continue the duel with arm wrestling thus saving the situation. The play then proceeded smoothly as per the plot.

He also trained me in reciting famous dialogues and songs from popular plays like Namkampni, Sadarame, Muddana

Manorame and other plays. I still recite lines and scenes from Namkampni. But, to my shame, I have completely forgotten everything else.

The end result of this early training was that right from my Primary School until my graduate degree and beyond, I was keen on seeing and acting in plays. I did act in a number of plays right from middle school until the final year in my undergraduate studies. Thanks to my father's mentoring, I won a number of prizes and trophies in debates and elocutions at high school level. In my first long teaching job of over seven years at Bangalore Military School, despite being a teacher of Mathematics, I voluntarily took the responsibilities of directing and staging plays in English for my boarding house as a tutor. I also trained tutees from my house in inter house competitions in elocutions and debates in English.

Modesty aside, my house teams in drama, debate and elocution won the inter house trophies almost every year continuously for over four to five years and I attribute this success to my father's genius in inculcating in me an interest in performing arts from a very young age.

CHAPTER 5

Sosale Rajagopala Iyengar, an entertaining and creative story teller

My father Sosale Rajagopala Iyengar was a great story teller. My friends and I have spent many evenings of our younger years listening to his funny and creative additions to various incidents from the epics Ramayana, Mahabharata and humorous stories from folklore and some written by famous Kannada literary figures. I still remember those nights when Ramesha, Sampathu, Kechu and I would sit round a bed spread on the floor and listen to his stories of Hanumantha walking in and out of Kumbhakarna's nostrils, the vanara sena competing with a seed that jumped from a cooked okra, Bhima's defeat at the hands of Hanumantha his brother, stories of Akbar and Birbal, tales from Gorur Ramaswamy Iyengar's books, tales from Krishna's childhood, stories from Tenali Ramakrishna, imaginary tales from Tipu sultan's reign or that of a king and his stammering, among many others. Many such stories are etched in my memory and I have managed to narrate some of these to my own grandchildren.

We used to affectionately call my Periya Krishnaswamy Iyengar, my father's elder brother as Kidsamy periya. Recently his son , a well known professor at Indian Institute of Science, Dr. K. Parthasarathy aka pachu passed away. During the traditional post cremation ceremonies, I met a number of my Periya 's grandchildren. They all recalled how they used to eagerly look forward to my father's visit to their grandfather's house. They remembered the happy times they spent with my father listening to interesting and humorous stories my father

used to tell them every night when he was visiting his brother T.S. Krishnaswamy Iyengar.

These stories kindled our imagination and led us for a short time to the realms of fantasy and make believe. A good number of these were his own creations and were not from any folklore. Here are some examples from the stories I remember.

1.The son in law's heaven

A man was visiting his in law's home for a short stay. As was the custom in India those days or even today in most cases, the in laws looked after the man so well that he decided to extend his stay indefinitely. He had a great time enjoying the perks of being a son in law and wanted to share the joy he experienced with others. However, being a son-in-law, he had his false pride and could not openly appreciate his in-laws.

At the same time, he wanted to share his happiness. He decided to express his sentiments in poetry. He took a piece of charcoal and wrote in Sanskrit on a whitewashed wall, "shwashura gruha Niwaase swarga thulyo naraanaam" meaning: for a man, living in his father-in-law's house is the equivalent of living in heaven.

This man had a brother-in-law who was worried that the son-in-law might stay there permanently as a guest thus adding more burden to his family. He wrote once again, in Sanskrit, underneath the statement from his brother-in-law, "pancha dinam waa shatdinancha" meaning only for five or six days.

Undeterred, the man wrote his earlier statement again under his brother-in-law's words. The brother-in-law also wrote his statement again and this battle of writing went on until almost one wall was covered with the two distinct statements.

The man was not giving up. He started writing, "shwashura

gruha Niwaase swarga thulyo naraanaam" on a new wall. The brother-in-law decided that it was time for his sister's husband to leave. So he wrote, " thadupari dinamekam paadarakshaa prayogam" meaning: if you stay one more day, you will be slapped with a pair of slippers.

One needs to understand this statement from a cultural point of view. In India, one of the biggest insults is to threaten someone with a beating from a pair of sandals or slippers. It is the highest form of insult.

The belief is that it is a lesser insult to beat someone with a pair of slippers than to threaten with such a beating. It is also common to see women beating men who misbehave with them in public with their slippers or footwear.

Needless to say that the son-in-law decamped from his father-in-law's house the next day.

2. Hitherto unknown story of Tenali Ramakrishna

Tenali Ramakrishna was a clever and witty courtier in the court of Krishnadevaraya, the most famous king from the Vijayanagara dynasty. Folklore from South India has many stories about his wit and cleverness that have entertained children and adults alike for generations. The story below was my father's own creative addition to this folklore.

An illiterate destitute village idiot, a childhood friend from Ramakrishna's village came to see him. He requested Ramakrishna's help in meeting the king and getting money as reward so that he can lead a decent life. He did not want Ramakrishna's money which he had offered.

The man had no talent. He did not have any knowledge of the scriptures or Holy books. He did not have any other skills that could impress the king either. Ramakrishna was at a loss as to how he can present his friend to the king.

He hit upon a plan to dress his friend up in the attire of a traditional rishi (sage). He ordered his friend to keep his mouth shut and not to utter a single word when he meets the king. He seated his friend in a palanquin and with lot of pomp and show, made four people carry the palanquin to the king's court.

Ramakrishna entered the court, saluted his king and introduced the sage as his own teacher or guru from the mountains who had come to visit him while travelling around the country imparting knowledge, wisdom and blessings. He also informed the king that his guru had taken a vow of silence for one year and would not speak and that he had brought him to the court so that the king can offer him gifts and seek his blessings.

The king who always admired the great intelligence and wisdom of Tenali Ramakrishna was impressed by seeing Ramakrishna's guru.

The king got up from the throne, walked up to the palanquin, placed two bags of gold coins at the feet of the sage, bowed his head and folded his hands in obeisance seeking the guru's blessings.

Ramakrishna's friend, the fake sage was overjoyed at seeing the king, receiving the money and at the sight of the king bowing to him. He forgot that he was to keep silent. At the same time, being illiterate, did not know any sacred words of blessings.

He felt he had to say something and exclaimed "ಉಸುತರಾ" (U SU TTA RAA) which was actually a gobble-de-gook expression with no meaning. The king was taken aback and was perplexed at the strange words of blessing. At the same time he was curious about the meaning of the blessing as here was an enlightened sage who had taken a vow of silence opening his mouth to say a blessing that did not seem to have any meaning. He asked Ramakrishna about the meaning of the

Guru's blessings.

The quick witted Ramakrishna replied, "O king Krishnadevaraya , you are truly blessed. My teacher who had taken a vow of silence has broken his vow to give you a great blessing. I will explain the meaning of these cryptic words. My guru always speaks in riddles and he has trained his students like me to interpret his words which are from our language Kannada".

Saying thus, he expounded

"The word U (pronounced as in uber) means like Umapathi, who is none other than Lord Shiva, the husband of Goddess Uma and the a member of the Hindu holy Trinity of supreme deities, the thrimurthies.

The word SU (pronounced as in suit) means sugyanadinda (meaning with wisdom and right principles attained by true and positive knowledge). The word TTA (unfortunately, there is no equivalent pronunciation for the Kannada consonant ಠin English. A reasonably close pronunciation would be a stuttering person saying the first syllable for "t" in the word teak wood) means thakkillade (meaning without treachery or pretensions)

The last word RAA (pronounced as in the Indian word for a king Maha ra ja) means Raajisu (meaning rule your kingdom)"

Krishnadevaraya was very pleased with this gracious blessing and gave the Guru yet another bag of gold coins and bid good bye to the Guru.

Ramakrishna escorted the fake Guru until he reached his house. He then asked his friend to quietly disappear from the city in camouflage and never to return to the capital.
I can assure you this story was a figment of my father's imagination and cannot be found in any folklore connected with Tenali Ramakrishna.

I have heard many such funny and creative stories from my father. Some of these stories are better in audio form than in script.

3.Tenali Ramakrishna and the gold mango

This is a story narrated to me by my father about Tenali Ramakrishna, the clever and witty minister in the court King Krishnadevaraya of the Vijayanagara dynasty.
One day, the king saw his long departed mother in his dream. She was crying and asking for something. The king could not comprehend what she was asking for. The next day, he invited the priests and purohits to ask them the meaning of the dream. They told him that his departed mother's soul had not yet attained salvation and hence the crying. They asked him whether he could remember any significant event that occurred around the period of her death. Krishnadevaraya recalled that when his mother was in her deathbed she wanted to eat a mango. As it was not the mango season, it took sometime to get a mango from orchards far away. Unfortunately, by the time the mango arrived at the palace, his mother was dead.

The priests said that this unfulfilled wish was the reason for her crying and that was also the cause of her soul not attaining salvation. Krishnadevaraya was very sad and asked the brahmin pandits for a solution. The brahmins who were well versed in the scriptures and rituals discussed among themselves and came up with a solution. They told the king that if he could perform a shraddha(shraddha: an annual hindu ritual observed to remember a departed soul on the date of his/her death) of his mother and donate mangoes made out of gold to shraddha brahmanas, his mother's wish would be fulfilled and her soul would attain salvation.

Krishnadevaraya, being a devout Hindu, believed in these rituals. He performed the shraddha and gave mangoes made out of gold to the shraddha brahmanas. The brahmanas were very happy receiving such expensive gifts from the king.

Tenali Ramakrishna heard about this and knew that the brahmins had exploited the king's faith and belief for their personal gain. He devised a plan to teach them a lesson. He also wanted the King to learn that one should not blind in their belief.

After a couple of days after the event at the palace, he approached the three brahmins and invited them to his house to preside over his mother's shraddha a couple of days later.
The brahmins were elated. They thought that since Ramakrishna was a minister in the King's court, they could expect some gold or at least silver gifts from Ramakrishna. On the designated day, they arrived at his house and performed the rites of shraddha. At the end of the Shraddha, Ramakrishna told them that his mother too passed away just before he could fulfil her last wish and that he would do as the king did to help his mother's soul attain salvation.

He locked the door of the dining room where the Brahmins were sitting after the meal, herded them them to a corner and explained, "my mother was suffering from epilepsy. The herbal doctor prescribed a cure. It was my mother's last wish that we heat an iron rod and sear her backside so that she can be cured. By the time the rod was heated , she passed away. Therefore, as per a similar advice you gave the King, I have heated a golden rod and will sear your backsides so that my mother's last wish is fulfilled and her soul attains salvation". Saying thus, he brandished the glowing rod near their rumps. Frightened at the thought of seared backsides, the three Brahmins unbolted the door and ran away.

The brahmins were scared, hurt and very angry. They rushed to Krishnadevaraya and complained to him about the harsh treatment from Ramakrishna . Krishnadevaraya was very angry with Ramakrishna.

He sent for Tenali Ramakrishna and tore into him accusing him of being disrespectful to scholars and treating them with

the indignity of searing their backside. Ramakrishna waited silently and respectfully until the king calmed down and asked him to explain himself.

With folded hands and bowing to the king in all humility, Ramakrishna replied, " Your majesty, I was told that on the advice of these scholarly Brahmins you were able to bring salvation to your mother's soul by giving them gold mangoes because you could not fulfil her last wish of eating mangoes. I was also in a similar situation wherein the doctor prescribed a burn on my mother's backside to cure her of her life-threatening epilepsy. Unfortunately, she passed away before we could administer the cure. I also wanted to bring salvation to her soul and I did what you did. Please explain to me where I went wrong?". Krishnadevaraya realised that the priests had taken advantage of his devotion to his mother and his faith and belief in the rituals. He thanked Ramakrishna for helping him see the truth. He admonished the brahmins for their treachery. However, being a kind person, he felt that they had been punished for their deeds and sent them away with a warning.

4. My father's version of Akbar Birbal story

As most of the readers might be aware Akbar and Birbal stories are a part of Indian folklore since the time of Mughals. I am not sure how many of the stories are true. However, these stories have regaled young generations for centuries and Amar Chitra Katha, a children's magazine has compiled and published a huge collection of these stories.

The story which I am narrating will not be found in such collections as it is a pure figment of my father's imagination and creativity. Here is the story as told to us by my father.

One day, emperor Akbar overheard his courtiers discussing the greatness of Rama as per the Epic Hindu scripture Ramayana. He thought that being a great king he should also be revered as another Rama. Hey called Birbal and ordered

him to write Akbar's Ramayana. Birbal agreed and told Akbar that he will name it as Akbarayana. However, Birbal explained that it would cost time and money. He asked Akbar for 3 months time and 10000 gold coins. Akbar granted his request.

Birbal returned after 3 months with manuscripts under his arm and after saluting Akbar requested him, " Jahanpanah, I have some doubts to clarify regarding Akbarayana. I need to get some information from her majesty the Begum Sahiba(the queen). Akbar escorted Birbal to the queen's chambers.

As the queen observed the purdah system she was behind the curtain and Birbal was on the other side. Birbal addressed the queen, " Rani Sahiba, Jahanpana has asked me to write his story on the same lines as our Ramayana. I need to ask you a question. In our Ramayana, the queen Sita was abducted by a Demon Ravana and Rama had to wage a war to rescue her. I would be very grateful if you could tell me who kidnapped you? or who is going to kidnap you? and if so, when? so that I can be present when Jahanpana rescues you".

The queen was livid with anger. She shouted at Birbal telling them that he was out of his senses to ask such embarrassing questions and walked away. Later, in her chambers, she gave Akbar a thorough dressing down. Akbar was chastised and was disappointed with the story. He asked Birbal to stop writing Akbarayana immediately.

Akbar was still keen on identifying himself with the great characters of Hindu epics. On another occasion he asked Birbal if there was any other epic story of bravery and valour that could be applied to his conquests. Birbal told him about Mahabharata. Akbar asked Birbal if this story had any kidnapping and other embarrassing episodes . Birbal replied, " Jahanpanah, this story is about two families fighting for the kingdom and there are no kidnappings or other embarrassing episodes". Akbar then asked Birbal to write Akbar Bharata.

Birbal agreed and as before ask for 4 months and 15000

gold coins as Mahabharata was a much longer Epic than Ramayana. Akbar agreed and give him the permission to be away from the court and paid him the gold coins.

After four months Birbal returned to the court of Akbar carrying volumes of written material and requested Akbar for an audience with the queen. Akbar was apprehensive and scared. He asked Birbal if his questions would upset the queen. Birbal said , “no Jahanpanah,it is a very simple question. Just one question and I can complete the book”. Akbar was vary and decided to accompany Birbal to the queen’s quarters and be present when the question was asked. Birbal approached the queen who was standing on the other side of the curtain and asked her politely, “ Begum Sahiba, Jahanpanah has asked me to write Akbar Bharat, the story similar to our holy Epic Mahabharata. In our Mahabharata, Draupadi the heroine had five husbands. I am aware that Jahanpanah is your first husband. Do you have four more? What are their names? Please forgive me. I need to stick to the truth”.

The queen was so angry that she threw silver vessels at Birbal. She saw Akbar standing next to him. She shouted Akbar for his foolishness in commissioning such ridiculous stories. She asked him how he could insult her by such embarrassing questions and walked away.

Akbar learnt his lesson and Birbal was able to save Akbar from the wrath of his Hindu subjects and ministers because, comparing the deeds of emperor Akbar, a mortal human being, to the deeds of God Vishnu as Rama and Krishna in Ramayana and Mahabharata respectively would have been a great insult to the Hindu faith and the emperor would have been very unpopular. At the same time, Birbal had to contend with the emperor’s ego.

As I said before, this story is not found in any book that contains the stories of Akbar and Birbal. It is a tribute to my father’s creativity in storytelling.

5. My father's own creation of how roast pork was added to the Chinese cuisine

Once upon a time, during the reign of early royal dynasties in China, an emperor passed an edict that pork should only be eaten after being cooked in boiling water and that anyone following any other method of cooking and eating pork would be severely punished. Chinese citizens have always been very law abiding and obedient citizens. Therefore, after this edict, for centuries, all across China, people ate pig's meat only after boiling it.

After about a century, it so happened that in a village close to the capital, a farmer had erected a bamboo sty with a grass thatched roof for his pigs. On a dry summer evening, a spark from the village blacksmith's hearth fell on the roof. The sty caught fire and by the time people helped douse the fire, all the pigs were roasted alive and were dead. As the carcasses were still very hot and steaming, the farmer decided to allow some time for them to cool down before clearing the ashes and the remains. After a reasonable time gap, he decided to clear the remains. He poked charred skin of one of the pig carcasses with his finger. The finger pierced the charred skin and his finger poked into a hot roasted meat of the pig. He instinctively removed his finger and put it in his mouth. He tasted the roast meat from the pig's interior and it was delicious. He cautiously repeated his exploration into other carcasses and found the taste of roast pig to be delicious every time. He called his family over and because they would be punished for eating roast pork, the whole family had a sumptuous meal of delicious roast pork without the knowledge of their neighbours and other villagers.

The farmer cleared the remains of the sty and the carcasses at night. The next day, he and his family erected a new sty identical to the one destroyed by the fire and kept a couple of pigs in the new sty. After a couple of months, the farmer contrived to burn his sty accidentally and once again, the family had a tasty roast pig meal surreptitiously. When this

happened a number of times during the year, the neighbours got suspicious and caught the family eating roast pork. They threatened to expose them to the authorities. The farmer begged for mercy and offered them pieces of roast pork. The neighbours also loved the taste of roast pork and decided to keep quiet. Over time, the whole village developed a taste for roast pork, However, because of the threat of imprisonment for eating roast pork, pig sties in that village caught fire on a regular basis to camouflage the roasting. As such frequent fires spread to other nearby villages, the officials became concerned and over time, even the government officials developed a liking for roast and regularly had their pig sties burnt due to accidental fire. Over decades, accidental fires destroying pig sties became very regular and common occurrences across the nation. The reigning emperor was very concerned about these inexplicable accidents and decided to investigate.

As luck would have it, one day, the reigning emperor was passing through a village when he noticed the still warm carcasses of pigs burnt in previous night's fire. He got down from his palanquin to investigate. After inspecting the damage, he decided to prod the carcass with his fingers. His fingers pierced through the burnt skin and got burnt in the hot roasted pork flesh. Like any other normal human being, his reaction was to put his fingers immediately in his mouth. He also loved the taste of roast pork. He continued probing the carcasses with his fingers and enjoying the taste of roast meat. At last, the emperor fathomed the reasons behind frequent fire accidents that destroyed pig sties across his empire. Thus after a couple of centuries after the edict prohibiting consumption of roast meat was passed, the reigning emperor repealed the law and paved way for the most popular Chinese dish of roast pork ribs.
I remember many such stories; I wish I could include an audio story where both king and the royal musician would stammer under high emotion. This story is hilarious and is popular among both adults and children who have heard it. My father also told us a number of creatively woven stories

of charcaters from Ramayana and Mahabharata involving Karna, Uttarakumara, Bhīma, Arjuna, hanuman, the monkey army, Kumbhakarna among others. Most of these are great entertainers as children's bedtime audio stories. I have made it a point to narrate these stories to my grandchildren and they just love them.

Rajagopala Iyengar's outstanding skills in Sanskrit language

Apart from the above, I remember a number of anecdotes that demonstrate my father's command over the sanskrit language and his creativity. You will have already read story 1 about the son in law which I have recorded in the previous pages. This was one example of my father's command over sanskrit language. I have given some more of these in the next few pages.

A note on Shraddha: the annual death ceremony in Hindu customs and rituals

All the following anecdotes which I am recalling from my memory are related to the Brahmin custom of observing the death anniversary of their parents and elders in an elaborate ceremony called Shraddha.

To understand the context of my father's stories, here is an explanation of shraaddha Brahmana

All devout Hindus mark the death anniversaries of their parents by observing a ceremony at home called shraaddha. On such occasions, they have a priest presiding over the ceremony. The family prepares and serves a specially prepared meal to three brahmins who symbolically represent two of the principal deities, and the ancestor whose death anniversary is being observed. As a part of the ceremony, such brahmins also get clothes, utensils and money as offerings.

Some Brahmins are known to earn their livelihood by making themselves available for such ceremonies, becoming shraaddha Brahmanas, and partaking in this ritual regularly in various homes. These Brahmins are not supposed to eat anything beginning from the previous night until after the ceremony gets over, post late afternoon on the shraaddha day, and not eat during that night as well. The only meal they are expected to eat that day is the shraaddha meal. Therefore they eat the shraaddha meal sumptuously to the brim, which makes the hosts happy feeling that their ancestors have been fed well and to their satisfaction.

There is another interesting and valid reason for these stories being uppermost in my memory. It has to do with the first twenty years of my life spent in Mysore.

Apart from the umpteen annual festivals, shraddha was an important part of our family's religious calendar. We had to attend every shraddha ceremony within our family circle and have the special meal which, to this day is one of my most favourite meals. I will narrate more about this special meal if and when I write my autobiography.

To return to the reason aforementioned, in my house, we used to observe three shraddhas, one for each grandparent by my father's adoption and the third was that of my step mother, my father's first wife. We had to attend two shraddhas in my father's anna's house, his periya's son from his adoption, who lived next door. Add to these the two shraddhas for my father's natural parents performed by his brothers. This brings the total to seven so far. In addition, add four more; three in my atthe's house similar to those of our house and one more for my eldest periya's wife. Throw in a couple from my friends houses.

I can safely say that on an average, I attended at least 15 shraddhas a year continuously for at least 17of the first 20 years of my life. I am not counting the first three years of my life as I cannot recall. However, based on my liking of the

special meals served in a shraddha ceremony, I am sure, I must have enjoyed these special meals right from my first birthday. Perhaps my clear memory of my father's stories is directly related to my penchant for shraddha meals.

Story 1: An ode to our dog Kaiser

The first is a funny limerick in sanskrit about our first domestic pet dog Kaiser. My father was about 67 years old at that time and was confined to the house after a third heart attack.

We had a black dog, a bitch who was a cross between a retriever and a pomarean. We had named her Kaiser after Wilhelm Kaiser of Germany. She was a vegetarian as no meat or egg in any form was allowed in our house. She was a small black fluffy terrier who was very friendly, cuddly, docile and lovable. On retirement, Saradavilas high school had presented my father with a green reclining easy arm chair made out of cane. She would be sitting on the floor watching my father. The moment he got up to sit on his favourite arm chair, she would run and jump on to the chair before he could sit. He had to then shoo her away. This happened almost every time he went to sit on the chair.

Like all dogs, our Kaiser too was a glutton. She never refused food in any form and was always greedy for food. She had the habit of grabbing and eating vegetable and fruit peels as well.

We did not know anything about looking after a dog at home. My father and everyone else at home gave her abundant love and spoiled her too with all sorts of food. My father's couplet was a tribute to her greed for food.

Here is the couplet in Sanskrit and my translation,

Kaiserashcha kariyashcha (you who is known as Kaiser and also as the black one Kariya)
Poorva janmepi shraaddha Brahmanaha (you must have been

a shraddha Brahmana in your previous life)
Ye janme akasmath shwanaha (accidentally, in this life you are a dog)
Janma janmepi shraaddha Brahmanaha (in all your future lives, you will continue to be born as a shraaddha brahmana meaning, your ability to eat to the brim will never leave you in all your reincarnations)

In reality, a Brahmin standing in for the departed ancestor in the annual shraaddha is supposed to perform certain rites and rituals to purify himself. Also, one isn't expected to accept more than one such invitation in a month. This worked well when the communities were small and villages were far apart. However, in big cities, there was and is a dearth of such Brahmins and some of them have made it a source of their livelihood by accepting 10 to 12 such invitations or more in a month. It is believed that such Brahmins will reincarnate as a lower form of life, perhaps as a dog.

I sometimes think, my father was giving a subtle comment on this as well in his limerick.

Story 2: The fallen brahmin

I remember a chat between my athimber, husband of my father's elder sister Rukku atthe, who was a well known scholar of sanskrit , was well versed in the various scriptures relating to rituals and my father. The discussion was about the qualities of a Brahmin to be invited as a shraaddha Brahmana.

A Brahmin or a Brahmana in Sanskrit is also called a dwija, meaning twice born. Incidentally, a Brahmin male born into a Brahmana family is considered to have a second birth when his parents perform his Brahmopadesam, a symbolic rebirth ceremony mainly characterised by his adorning the sacred thread yajnopavitham, a symbol of right to learn the scriptures vedas, upanishad, puranas and associated texts.

According to the ancient Brahmin tradition, at the age of about eight years , the boy would leave his parents home and move into gurukulam, the ancient Indian equivalent of a residential school or a seminary where he would gain knowledge and education from a guru until he becomes a competent scholar in about ten years. During this period his Guru and guru's wife would act as loco parentis and become his foster parents in his second birth.

My athimber quoted,

पतित द्विजह श्राद्द ब्राह्मणत्वेन आमन्थ्रणाय अनुपयुक्तह ।

I hope I am able to write this in english letters : " patita dwijaha shraaddha brahmanatwena aamanthranaaya anupayuktaha" meaning a fallen Dwija, a Brahmin who has left the path of a true Brahmana should not be invited to officiate in a shraaddha in any capacity.

My father countered with the following answer, "But my dear athimber, there is another hidden meaning to this quote. Dwija means twice born and this could as well refer to one's teeth as they also are born twice. It could also mean that a Brahmin who has lost his teeth and is not able to chew should not be invited to the shraddha ceremony as a shraddha Brahmana".

My athimber thought over, chuckled and said, "what you say could be technically true, However, I do not think our ancient rishis and scholars had this idea in their minds when they made this observation in the rituals".

Story 3: pragmatic practical changes to some of the ritual words in a shraddha

In a shraddha ceremony, after the performance of homa which crudely translates to the ritual of offerings to gods and ancestors in a holy fire, the three Brahmins who preside over the ceremony as two prominent deities and the departed ancestor, are served the special meal. At the end of the meal,

which is one of the most important parts of the shraddha, the next step of the ritual is for the son who is performing the shraddha to ask the three shraddha Brahmans in sanskrit, " भोजनान्ते किमपेक्षितम "(bhojananthe kimapekshitam) meaning, "at the end of the meal, what else do you wish for?" As per the accepted norms, the three Brahmins are to reply once again in Sanskrit, " सकलम सम्पूर्णम "(sakalam sampoornam) meaning "every wish is fulfilled", thereby assuring the man that his ancestors are pleased with his devotion to them.

Here is my father's anecdote.

Some day in late 1800's , the Jodidar of Sosale; Jodidar means a rich landowner; an Iyengar was performing his mother's shraddha. As per the ritual, at the end of the meal, the Jodidar asked the three shraddha Brahmanas in Sanskrit, " Bhojananthe kimapekshitham? (भोजनान्ते किमपेक्षितम) " meaning, "at the end of the meal, what else do you wish for?" As per the accepted norms, he expected the three brahmins to reply in Sanskrit, " sakalam sampoornam (सकलम सम्पूर्णम)" meaning "every wish is fulfilled".

However, while two Brahmins recited the accepted words, the third Brahmin who was the designated as the representative of his departed mother replied to the Jodidar , "please give me two acres of land".

One needs to understand that in the olden days, the shraddha ceremony was performed with a lot of faith and devotion and with a belief that unless the three Brahmins were satisfied, the ancestor would not be happy in the nether world thereby making the son unworthy of carrying on their lineage and legacy.

The Jodidar believed implicitly in the ritual and thought that if he did not fulfil the Brahmins' wish, his mother would rot in hell. He promised to gift the man two acres of land. The Brahmin agreed and the ceremony went on to its conclusion as per rituals.

After the ceremony, without any hesitation or complaint, the Jodidar prepared a gift deed in the name of that Brahmin and gave him two acres of agricultural land from his family holdings.

This incident put a big scare among people who believed in the shraddha ritual, as not everyone would be able to meet such outrageous demands if made during the shraddha ceremony. There were many poor Brahmins who couldn't even afford to offer a proper traditional shraddha meal to the designated Brahmins.

The scriptures prescribed an alternative for the traditional shraddha for those believers who were very poor and were unable to perform a traditional shraddha at home.
The alternative was to collect whatever portions they could afford of the special vegetables used in a shraddha meal, rice, root vegetables, lentils, coconut, jaggery and cash, and offer it to the main deity in their local temple which would then be a gift to the temple priest. However, because of the incident at the Jodidar's house, even middle class families and those who were well-off started using this alternative. This resulted in a lack of income for the various priests whose livelihood depended upon invitations for performing the shraddha ceremony.

The priests joined together to come up with an alternative to the rite at the end of the meal in a shraddha that would not only satisfy the traditional norms and beliefs of the shraddha karta (the son who performs the shraddha ceremony) but also close this loophole so that they can earn their livelihood.

The scholars came up with an alternative which was brilliant.

They amended the question asked by the son performing the ceremony for the departed parent. The new question asked by the shraddha karta was changed to,

भोजनान्ते, अस्मिन ग्रुहे , अस्याम दिने, भगवन्निवेदयनी पक्वापक्व पदार्थानस्ये किमपेक्षितम

“(Bhojanante, asmin gruhe , asyaam dine, bhagavannivedayani pakwaapakwa padaarthanasye kimapekshitam) meaning, “at the end of the meal, what do you wish from the cooked and raw items offered to God today in our house?” instead of the original , “ भोजनान्ते किमपेक्षितम “ meaning, “at the end of the meal, what else do you wish for?

I am not sure if this story is true because in most of the shraddahas I attended especially in my younger days, I always heard the priests using the original question and answer at the end of the meal. I have never heard the version as above. Knowing my father’s creativity and his sense of humour, he could have made up the whole story.

An anecdote from a family wedding

This anecdote was narrated to me by my periya’s daughter. I understand this incident happened during her wedding ceremony.

To understand the background one needs to know about the rituals connected with a South Indian Brahmin wedding. This ritual has come down from centuries of tradition. Right from the times of the Vedas until almost early 1800’s, Brahmin boys who had undergone the brahmopadesam or yajnopavitham ceremony, would travel on foot to Kashi to learn the scriptures. These boys would be around 8 to 10 years old and as there were no hotels or lodges they used to stay in other Brahmin houses in the villages along the road. As these were potential scholars, the family in the village that had girls would request this young bachelors to get married to their daughters and then proceed to Kashi so that by the time these young men returned after their education, the girl would have come of age ready to assume responsibilities as a competent wife. In many cases, the family of the boys, on requests from other Brahmin families in or around their village, would arrange such marriages before sending their sons to Kashi.

Thanks to more accessible education and the impact of modern schooling, these days this practice is no longer observed. However even today, at traditional wedding ceremony in a Brahmin family in South India, they still observe the ritual. The difference is that a highly qualified, University educated modern groom, adorned with a dhoti, wearing brand new slippers and carrying a walking stick all gifted by the prospective father in law as a part of the dowry, still walks out of the wedding hall during the pre wedding ceremony on the morning of the wedding as though he is going towards Kashi. Then, the father of the bride runs behind him with an umbrella, completes the ritual of stopping him, brings him back, and after certain rituals where he offers his daughter in marriage, the bride and the groom exchange garlands and sit on a swing with family members and guests standing around happily. This ceremony is called Kashi Yatra ceremony and is observed as a ritual under the direction of a presiding priest who chants appropriate sacred Sanskrit verses at various times during the ritual. These Sanskrit verses or chants are addressed to either the groom or the father of the bride and they are expected to repeat the same.

When the Kashi Yatra ceremony at the wedding of my sister, another of Sriranga Periya's daughters was observed, my father had the traditional role of holding an open umbrella over the groom's head.

I understand that the priest who was performing the ceremony had poor vision and every time he wanted the groom to repeat sacred words in Sanskrit, he would address these to my father who was standing behind the groom . My father would then whisper the words to the groom and he would repeat them. However, after a while, it was becoming embarrassing. At the end of the ceremony, as my father escorted the bride and groom to the wedding platform for the main wedding ceremony, in a low tone, he told my sister and others around, "this priest is an Andha Nrupa (meaning blind king in Sanskrit)". My father did not want to offend the

priest and at the same time he wanted to clarify that the priest was not addressing the groom. Only those around the wedding couple who knew Sanskrit understood what happened, what he meant and chuckled without offending the priest.

A short treatise on Valmiki Ramayana

As I mentioned earlier, my father had an excellent command of the Sanskrit language. As a hobby, he had written a scholarly essay in Kannada on some of his observations from Valmiki Ramayana. This manuscript handwritten in the 1960's had over fifty A4 size handwritten pages . He had got these pages bound into a book. When our family moved from Mysore to Davanagere and then on to Bangalore, due to wear and tear during these translocations and effects of poor storage over a number of decades, the first few pages were lost and the ink in some of the other pages have faded as well. My father did not have the financial resources to get his book printed. To him, it was his own reflections to quench his intellectual thirst. He wrote it for his enjoyment.

He used to discuss his observations verbally with like minded scholars. He also used to enlighten me, my sister and members of extended family about the beauty of Valmiki's usage of Sanskrit language in his epic "the Ramayana".

It is my misfortune that I did not really appreciate the value of his writings in my younger days and neglected to preserve this manuscript. To my shame, it never occurred to me throughout my adult life overseas to salvage the pages of this manuscript and get them printed, especially when I had the financial ability to do so.

Currently, my youngest sister has the manuscript. The initial introduction and first six to seven pages are gone. I am in the process of getting the document typed out in Kannada in its present state. Unfortunately, none of us have the depth of knowledge and the creative genius of my father to rewrite the

lost pages. It is entirely my fault that a valuable document like this is incomplete and a great loss. I will hopefully publish this incomplete document as a recognition of my father's genius.

CHAPTER 6

Rajagopala Iyengar, the silent social revolutionary

Sosale Rajagopala Iyengar was a keen social worker who went out of his way to help pupils obtain good education irrespective of the pupils' caste or social status. Mysore has always been a popular destination for students seeking good education either at high school or at university level. From early 1900's , many poor students from villages would come to Mysore to study. A number of these students were without any financial or academic support. Those days, most of them would find themselves in free charitable homes for students that would give them free accommodation. However, many such places did not offer free food or any help to find places in educational institutions for the students who arrived from the villages.
One such place was the Anaathaalaya (a free hostel for needy students) near our house started by the great philanthropist Vruddha pitamaha or the grand sire of Mysore Sri Venkata Krishnaiah. My father was a disciple of this great personality and he followed his values of philanthropy and social service. My father was closely associated with the Anaathaalaya and helped many needy, poor students from villages to get free accommodation at this hostel. He also helped a number of such students get free education at Saradavilas High School where he was a teacher.

He used to offer voluntary help to them in the evenings by giving free tuitions in some of the subjects, especially nearer the time of school and board examinations. Thanks to his selfless service and generosity, a huge number of poor students were able to gain quality education which resulted in many of them succeeding in life far above and beyond their

social circumstances.

In addition to these, he also worked tirelessly to feed these pupils. From the age of about nine until fourteen, I used to accompany him on Saturday mornings to the market street called Santhepete which had a long line of shops that housed grocers, oil and grain merchants. My father would ask the shop owners for donations of food grains, groceries, toiletries (mainly washing soap and tooth powder) and oil and carry them across to the poor students home for their morning or evening meals.

At that time, there was no concept of breakfast. All high schools started lessons at 11:00 am. We used to have lunch at 10:00am and then go to school. Fortunate ones like me would have a cup of coffee in the morning and snack, milk, tea or coffee when we returned at about 5:00pm. But, the students living in charity homes just had two meals a day.
There was another wonderful support system which was a tradition in the older parts of Mysore city called vaaraanna (roughly translates to weekly meals rota). Poor students from villages who came to the city to study and lived in free student homes would go round the various houses in the area asking them if they provided vaaraanna. This meant that each house would feed a small number of such pupils both lunch and dinner on a rota basis every day. The families never treated these students differently from their own children. These students would sit with the family as a member and eat whatever the family was eating. Thus, a pupil might have lunch on every Monday in one home, supper in another and so on throughout the week. Apart from providing these poor pupils their food, these arrangements also helped them meet their social and emotional needs of living with families.

I remember from the age of five until almost the age of eigthteen, eating every meal at home during school days with at least four or five such students. They were treated with the same love, affection and respect as the rest of the family.

Until I was in my teens, I always accompanied my father on his monthly shopping to Santhepet and the market. Ever so often, I would see grown up men prostrate on the road and touch my father's feet and seek his blessing. They would then gratefully recall my father's kindness, love and help during their school years when they were poor students from villages.

They would almost always attribute their success in later life to my father's help during their high school education.

I clearly remember an incident that happened when I was ten or eleven years old. It was a Saturday night. Somewhere around 2:00 am, there was a loud knock on our door. My father thought that some tragedy had occurred in the family and someone had come to inform him. When he opened the door, there stood middle Aged man of about thirty five or forty years, holding a huge banana bunch in both hands. The moment he saw my father, he kept the banana bunch on the floor, fell at my father's feet and asked for his forgiveness. My father recognised him as one Lakshminarayana, a student from a village called Magge near Hassan whom he helped in mid 1940's by getting him free accommodation in the Anathaalaya, free education at Saradavilas High School and also by feeding him twice a week under the vaaranna system at home for three years.

Lakshminarayana went on to complete his graduation and became a big businessman. However, my father could not understand why his student he affectionately recalled as Puttasakre(meaning small cube of sugar) was asking for forgiveness. Lakshminarayana said that in his adult life, he had forgotten the role my father had played in making him who he was. He mentioned that the night before his midnight arrival at our home, he had seen my father in his dream and that all the memories came flooding back. He was literally in tears because he did not get in touch with my father for over twenty years. He decided to drive down in a taxi at night and meet my father. He then requested my father to accompany

him that morning to Magge for the opening ceremony of a school he had built in his village and insisted that my father should inaugurate the school.

My father did go to Magge that morning and came back late at night with baskets of fruits, honey, coconuts, jack fruit and a pair of dhotis too. This was the kind of impression my father created in his pupils.

At my father's request, Lakshmi Narayana offered free education to ten poor students from nearby villages every year at his school. I remember meeting Lakshminarayana once more when he called on my father when he came to Mysore. I do not know whether the school still exists or what happened to Lakshminarayana. However, the incident made me realise yet again what a great personality my father was.

CHAPTER 7

Rajagopala Iyengar, a true member of a joint family

To appreciate my father's contributions to his family, one needs to have the background information on my father's family.

My father was born in 1906 as the sixth son and the eighth child of my grandparents nine children. My father's younger brother was born two years later and my grandmother died within a short time after his birth. The whole family was in Sosale at that time where my grandfather Sosale Rangappa had built our family home. My grandmother's mother was living at the house and she took over the responsibility of bringing up the whole family. When my father was about five years old, the family moved to another family house in Devirammanni Agrahara near Mysore palace to help send the boys to school and College. By then, my grandfather did not have regular employment either. As they themselves did not have any children, Alamelamma my grandmother's younger sister affectionately known as chitthi (my father's family called her shitthi) to the family and her husband Gunja Narasimhachar chitya together with my great grandmother took over the responsibility of Sosale Rangappa's family in Mysore.

When my father was twelve years old, he became seriously ill with typhoid, was delirious and unconscious most of the time. With little known cure available at that time, the family had given up the hope of his survival. However, he miraculously got over the illness and I understand that the first word he uttered when he regained consciousness was Itthi (for

Shitthi). My grandmother's sister and her husband were so happy that they requested my grandfather to permit them to adopt my father as their son. Thus they became my adopted grandparents.

I learnt from my father that my natural grandfather was very happy to handover the whole family to this couple and enjoy a free life without much family responsibility.
I believe my adopted grandfather passed away in 1941, and my adopted grandmother who was in effect the real matriarch of the entire family passed away in 1946 or 47.
Adoption of a boy was (and perhaps even today is) very important for Hindu families with no children of their own as every married couple believed that they needed a son to perform the funeral rites.

For the benefit of those readers who do not know about lineage in Hindu families, here is a link to understand the basics of Hindu lineage that gives one a right to perform rituals for one's ancestors. Please read: *https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/astrology/others/understanding-gotras-the-ancient-lineage-system-in-hindu-culture/articleshow/110557098.cms.*

The only difference the adoption of my father made was that we moved from Shatamarshana gotram to Naidrava Kashyapa gotram, the lineage of my adopted grandfather Gunja Narasimhachar of the village of Kalale. Otherwise, starting with my father, as far as I know, we have always been and continue to be members of the Sosale Rangappa's family. My father's bond with his siblings and their families was very strong and the following anecdotes from his life between 1930 and 1974 demonstrate his affection, love, and care to his siblings and their children in addition to his own family and to his students.

Here are some anecdotes from his life:

A responsible and supportive husband

My father's first marriage was to a lady, Kamala from Karur in Tamil Nadu. I am not sure of the year. Perhaps in early 1930's. They had a daughter named Padmasini. I understand that due to some illness or perhaps a difficult child birth, I am not aware of the cause, his first wife Kamala died in 1940 when Padmasini was about 5 years old.

My father then married my mother as his second wife in 1942 when my mother was 16 years old and he was 36 years old. My elder sister was born in 1944. My mother, at the age of 16 was married and had to look after a girl of about 5 years right from day one in her new life as a bride. Unfortunately, my eldest step sister Padmasini succumbed to a pandemic in 1945.

I have seen photographs of my step mother and her daughter, my eldest step sister. They were very beautiful.

In Indian marriages, the bride is given a lot of silver ware and gold jewellery by her parents at the time of the wedding and my step mother's wedding gifts were no exception. Those days, the custom was for the widower to keep all the assets of his departed wife and the families accepted this as the norm. However, after his first wife's death, my father put together all the silver ware and jewellery she had brought with her and personally went to her parents' place in Karur, Tamilnadu, and handed them over to her family as he felt that in the absence of their daughter, this wealth rightfully belonged to them.

It is a tribute to his sense of responsibility and loyalty that despite losing his wife and daughter and taking a new wife, he continued to maintain close cordial relations with his in laws and their families from his first marriage.
Even the parents of my step mother considered my mother as their daughter and treated her with lot of love and affection.

I remember a number of visits from my step grandmother and step uncles to our home in Mysore. Even after almost thirty years since the death of my step mother, on 1973, my father had asked me to attend the wedding of his niece, the eldest daughter of his brother in law from first marriage. I had travelled to Karur to attend the marriage.

In fact a thambi of my step mother, her chitthi's son was working in the Railways and was transferred to Mysore. He became a very close member of our family. When my younger brother had a minor operation and my younger sister after me had a severe illness, he was a great pillar of strength and support to our family. He even came to visit our house in 1972 when my father moved to Bangalore. This was a clear example of how my father was respected and loved for his values.

My father had similar strong bonds with my mother's family as well. My eldest sodara mava (mother's younger brother) lived with us in our house for about five years while he completed his first degree. My chikkamma (my mother's younger sister) who was a couple of days older than my elder sister lived with us for three to four years while she completed her high school education.

My father considered my mother's siblings as his own children and treated them with a lot of love and care during their time with us. The positive outcome of this arrangement was that I became very close to my elder sodara mava.
We were living in Mysore, the cultural capital of India and the seat of the Royalty. From the year of independence until 1967, the Maharaja of Mysore celebrated the Dasara festival with all the pomp and show of the erstwhile Mysore kingdom. This was among the most popular tourist occasions in India and thousands of visitors from all over the country flocked to Mysore during this period. Like my father, my mother also hailed from a large close knit family of uncles, cousins, nephews and nieces. During the Dasara period, our house would have many guests, mainly relatives from my mother's

side only because almost all relatives from my father's side were living in Mysore.

I recall that during Dussera, we would, on an average, have over 15 to 20 guests living with us for about 10 days. In addition, any relatives and their families close or distant, passing through Mysore would halt at our house for a couple of days. My stepmother's mother, her brother and cousins would visit us at least once a year and stay with us for more than a week while going on piligrimage to nearby holy places.

My mother's uncles, aunts and cousins were close to her and would visit our house regularly.

All this hosting was done in our old house with a hall, one room, one toilet and one bathroom by my parents who had limited income and a family of five children of their own. I have never heard my parents complain about the guests and I still wonder how they managed to meet the expenses? Perhaps another reason why we were in perpetual debts!

A number of my mother's uncles, aunts and cousins were very close to my father as well. They used to visit our house regularly either alone or along with their families. While they did respect my father as a son in law of their family, their relationship with my father was more like that of a younger or elder sibling than that of a son in law. As with his own nieces and nephews from his siblings side, my father was a close friend and confidant to many of my mother's younger cousins, nephews and nieces.

Raja, Raja chithya, Raja mama: a caring brother, uncle and friend to his siblings, their children and grandchildren

Even though he was the sixth brother among eight, and the eighth out of nine siblings, my father, by far, was the most favourite brother and uncle in the family. All his elder brothers' children of addressed my father as Raja Chithya where as his sisters' children addressed him as Raja mama.

He had only one younger brother. I cannot remember his children addressing my father as periya. He was the favourite Raja chithya for all nephews and nieces on his brother's side.

Pillar of support for a brother's family

From about 1912 until 1945, my father lived in the family house in Devirammanni Agrahara along with his eldest brother Rangaswamy Iyengar who was a widower, his two daughters and two sons, my grandfather, my grand parents from my father's adoption and his younger brother Sundararaja iyengar. My father started working as a teacher around 1928 and became the main support for his elder brother's family.

I am not sure of the date of the following incident. The only hint I have is that his eldest brother Rangaswamy Iyengar's children were quite young. I surmise, it could have been around mid 1920's.

His eldest brother along with his children had gone to our ancestral house in Sosale, perhaps to visit the temple or to attend a celebration in the village. My Rangasamy periya was a very religious person who had lot of faith in and devotion to Lord Vishnu. He was also well versed with the scriptures and the epics. He decided to perform tapasya (meditation/ penance) chanting Lord Vishnu's name until the Lord appeared to him in person or to give up his life in this Holy ritual. Deciding thus, he went and sat on a boulder in the middle of the River Cauvery. The village Sosale is on the banks of the life line of Karnataka and Tamilnadu, the holy River Cauvery.

Rangasamy periya, was following the stories from scriptures where sages and demons alike did perform tapasya (meditation) for a long time with concentration and devotion to meet their deity, generally one of the holy trinity of Indian Pantheon Brahma, Vishnu or Maheshwara.

My grandfather Sosale Rangappa who was also at the village at that time along with other relatives from the village tried to dissuade my periya. But, they were unable to convince my periya. My father was generally accepted among his siblings as the 'go to person' for any crisis in the family.

So the message went to my father. He rushed to Sosale, collected his brother's children, went to the River bank and saw his brother sitting on a small boulder in the river. But for the rainy season when the river is flooded, Cauvery river near Sosale has a very wide and shallow flow interspersed with small deep pools here and there. My father held the hands of all four children, two in each hand, waded in the river to reach his brother. He tried to convince his brother to give up the tapasya as in this day and age, he would not succeed and pleaded with him to return home for the sake of the children. My periya did not agree despite all the pleas and requests. My father then threatened him, "Rangsami, this is madness. You give up this tapasya and return home, I will look after and bring up your children and you can spend your time with prayers and meditation to appease your deity without any family responsibilities or I will personally drown each of your children in the river in front of you and leave you to your tapasya".

My uncle believed my father on both counts and came home. True to his word, my father brought up the two boys and the two girls as his own children, fed, clothed and educated them giving them all the love and care a father should. When the two girls came of age, he arranged their marriages too. When the two nephews completed their education, the elder one became a primary school teacher in Mysore and the younger one became a high school teacher in government schools and later retired as a headmaster. On their marriage to my father, both my stepmother and my mother walked into this family when these children were growing up.

From the way these children treated my parents and their adoration, love and respect to my father, I realised that my

father fulfilled his promise to his brother. I know that my periya did not take any responsibility for the family and devoted his time to prayers and meditation.

The younger of the two sons of my Rangaswamy periya was very close to our family . He used to visit us regularly and every time he came to our home, he brought me some toffees or boiled sweets. There were occasions when he had an argument with his dad or brother and he would come to my dad to discuss the issue. Unfortunately for him, his father despite being a devoted religious person, joined hands with his elder brother to unfairly deprive him of a share in the family property. I remember the day this happened as my cousin came to my father in an excited state with tears and told my father how he was cheated out the property by force. My father went to his elder brother's house and tore into him and his son. But, the deed was done. After this incident, my cousin , the younger son of my periya broke up all relations with his father and brother and even stopped visiting them. [1]

He would come to Mysore for a day or, stay with us and spend time with my father without even going to his father's house. He maintained regular contact with our family, even after my father's demise in 1974 until his death in 2010. I do not think my father forgave his brother or his son. However, after a couple of years, he maintained normal relations with his brother. As far as that family was concerned, my father was the final court of appeal on any decision.

Saving a nephew's marriage

The elder son of my periya Rangaswamy was married to an angel of a lady. However, in the initial years of their marriage, my cousin, for reasons I do not know, did not maintain happy

1 ***Comment:*** *After writing this memories, I received a clarification from my periya's eldest son's eldest son that his father had paid equivalent amount of money to his brother in lieu of a share in the property.*
He has also clarified that subsequently the relations between his father and his uncle were harmonious and that his uncle visited their house regularly.
I was not aware of this information and I narrated the incident in good faith as I remembered.
If I have inadvertently caused pain to my cousin's family, I apologise unreservedly.

relations with his wife. I understand that my father took the responsibility of repairing the relationship and bringing the couple together. My sister in law was for ever grateful to my parents for standing by her side and establishing her family. I remember her often telling me and my sisters, “every time I light a lamp in front of God at the shrine in my house, I pray for Raja chithya’s life and health because without his help my life would have been ruined”.

Taking care of grand nephew

In 1969, my father retired from teaching and took over the job of a governor to the family of descendants of Rajanahalli Hanumanthappa, the big business magnate from Davanagere in Karnataka. My father was housed by the family in their company quarters from 1969 until 1972. Mr Hanumanthappa owned renowned industries like Davangere Cotton Mills and Ravi Oil mills. The grandson of Rajanahalli Hanumanthappa had heard of my father’s reputation as an educationist. He appointed my father as a governor to guide and facilitate the education of his children.

My cousin referred to in the previous story, the elder son of my Rangsamy periya had two sons. The elder of these is a couple of years older than me. He completed his first degree in Mysore. With his qualification and lack of experience, he was finding it difficult to find a job. In order the help this young man stand on his own two feet, my father used his relations with the Hanumanthappa family to get his grandnephew a job in Davanagere Cotton Mills. In addition, this boy lived in our house in Davanagere as a member of the family until my father moved to Bangalore in 1972. This boy worked in that group of industries until they closed down in early 2000’s. This is yet another compliment to my father’s sense of duty of care to his family.

Friend and confidante to nephews and nieces

My father enjoyed special relationships with his brothers

and their children. He was the person to complain to when any of his elder brothers or sisters had a disagreement with their children. He was a confidante to many secrets from his younger nieces and nephews.
When one of his nephews, another elder brother's son, fell in love with a girl from a different Iyengar sect, his parents were very opposed to the alliance and there was a lot of disagreements and arguments at their home. My uncle and aunt did not wish to attend the wedding ceremony. My father acted as the mediator and successfully mended the strained relations. He personally escorted his brother and sister in law to the wedding ceremony thereby bringing harmonious relations within the family.

This elder brother's daughters were academically gifted students in History and Kannada respectively. These two were apples of his eye. When they finished their first degree, my uncle asked them to discuss their academic future with my father, their pet uncle telling them that he had no say in whatever my father decided. My father was their mentor and guide. Through discussion and friendly debate, he was able to encourage them in critical analysis and interpretations thus improving their understanding and interpretive skills. They still remember how he would be waiting at their house on each examination day to ask them about the questions and their responses.

Here are a couple of anecdotes from my akka, youngest daughter of Sriranga periya, my father's elder brother.

When she was in her final year class of her high school leading to SSLC examinations, a month prior to her examinations, she realised that she did not know many of the topics in Geography and she panicked. When she asked her parents for help, they said that they did not know how to help her and asked her to go to Raja chithya. Off she went to ask my father. He asked her a couple of questions only to realise that she did not know much of the contents of her course in Geography. He spent the next couple of weeks teaching her

the various topics. On the day my sister sat the examination in Geography, my father came to her house to see her. He had a copy of the question paper and asked her to tell her the answers she wrote. Assessing her answers, he remarked that she might not make it to a pass grade in that paper. However, when the results were published and the statement of marks were distributed, my sister had obtained respectable marks in Geography.

She concluded the anecdote saying, " but for my Raja chithya, I was doomed to fail my SSLC"

The second anecdote was about an incident which once again almost stopped her completing her Pre University course. She had studied Tamil as a second language until high school. When she joined pre university, she decided to change her second language to Kannada as she was well versed in that language. She attended the lessons throughout the year and was confident of doing well.

In those days, one had to get a hall ticket month before the examinations from the College office. Without the hall ticket, one was not permitted to enter the examination hall and write the examinations. I think the practice continues even today except that these days, one needs to have a verified and attested photograph of oneself attached to the hall ticket.

When my sister went to collect her hall ticket, she was shocked to notice that the subject for her second language examination was mentioned as Tamil instead of Kannada. On enquiry, she was told that she should have officially changed the subject at the University offices at the beginning of the Pre University course by completing a prescribed application form and getting the permission.

My sister was worried and did not know how to address the issue. My Sriranga periyamma was among the first few batches of women graduates from Mysore University . My sister asked her for help and my periyamma told her, "during

my times, my parents didn't help. You sort it out on your own". My periyamma's intention was to make her daughter to be independent and resourceful. When akka asked her father, his reply was, " Don't ask me. I do not know how to help. Go to your chithya. He will sort it out for you". My sister literally ran to our house and told my father about the crisis situation that threatened her educational career.

My father listened to her and immediately took her to Crawford Hall in Mysore where the various university offices functioned. He had one of his students working as an officer in the examinations administration section. He explained the situation to his student. The student rectified the matter and issued my sister with an amended hall ticket that showed her second language to be Kannada. Interestingly, this akka, my doddappa's daughter went on to do a degree and a master's in Kannada and throughout her academic career, my father took a personal interest in her education. After completing her post graduate degree in Kannada at a very young age, she ended up working as a lecturer in Kannada at Maharaja's College where she had to teach mainly male students who had a reputation of being unruly and boisterous. I understand that my Periya was not very happy about her becoming a lecturer.

At the end of her first day at the College as a lecturer, when she returned home, she met my father who was waiting anxiously at the gate. He asked her about her experience and once he was satisfied that she can hold her own in front of her students, he gave her some encouraging advice. My sister remembered how my father was a steadfast support to her throughout her academic and early professional career. She continued to work as a lecturer until the time she got married to a young lawyer from Tamiil Nadu. She moved to her spouse's place in Tamilnadu. She then became an educational entrepreneur starting a private school for students from Primary up to SSLC. She was the head of that school for a long time and also taught English and other subjects. Her elder sister, another favourite niece of my

father, unfortunately lost her husband at a young age and joined her sister to work in that school as a teacher of English and History. After a long and successful tenure as the founder owner of the school, my sister sold the school to another competent group and is now retired and settled in Mysore with her husband.

I am in touch with both these cousins and the bond between us is still very strong mainly because I happen to be their dear Raja Chithya's son , an uncle who was an affectionate second parent to both of them (in addition to other cousins from other uncle's families).

When one of my another periya's youngest sons failed his final B.Sc. examinations in late 1950's , his father expelled him from the house. The boy came running to my father and asked for his advice. My father went and told his brother that he would send his son back with a degree. He gave his nephew refuge for a year in our house while he prepared for his retakes.

Thanks to my father's support, love and encouragement, this nephew passed the final examinations to get his first degree and went back to his father's house before embarking on a successful professional career as a supervisor with Richardson and Cruddas in Mumbai and in Chennai. This cousin of mine who is around 12 years elder to me lived in our house as a family member for a year as my elder brother. From then on until now, this cousin has maintained his relations as an adopted son of our family.

One of my another periya's son was a brilliant engineer and retired as a professor of electrical engineering and electronics at the prestigious Indian Institute of science, the Premier institution in India for engineering and scientific research. He was a visiting professor to Ivy League universities in the USA. He recalled a very interesting anecdote from his life which involved my father.

He was asked by the Government of Karnataka to translate one of his highly acclaimed academic research papers from English to Kannada at a very short notice. He remembered hiring a taxi on a Saturday morning to drive from Bangalore to Mysore to meet Raja chithya without prior intimation and to get the paper translated.

I understand that my father sat with him to go through the English version and translate the paper into Kannada over the evening. The Government accepted the translation as authentic and published it. My cousin recalls how proud my father was of his nephew's achievement and in return, how proud my cousin was of his chithya's command of English and Kannada. He remembered that he had such implicit faith in my father's ability and his willingness to help him that he did not even think of giving my father advance notice. He just assumed that my father would be able to translate on the spot and that my father justified his trust.
Even in 1950's and early 1960's, there were many families in Mysore that did not send their daughters to university or higher education. My father believed in women's education and their independence. He encouraged his nieces to study well, gain a degree or two and earn a living so that they could be financially independent. If I recall correctly, my eldest periya and my athimber were both very learned scholars of Sanskrit and were highly religious, traditional minded and did not believe in getting their daughters educated and resisted my father's attempts.

Making a difference to the lives of his niece and grand niece.

I narrate two instances where my father's intervention made a significant difference to the lives of two of the girls in the family. One such was my periya Rangaswamy Iyengar's elder son's first born, a daughter. She was a bright girl and could have benefitted from university education. But, my periya and his son were very adamant that this girl will not study at the university after passing her high school examinations. When my father went to their house, this girl, his grand niece

complained to my father. My father had a serious discussion with her father and ultimately convinced him to admit her to a primary school teacher training college. She successfully completed her course and joined a private primary school as a teacher. My father also insisted that she should study Hindi as an additional language, studying privately at home and appearing for nationally recognised proficiency certificates examinations. She completed the required level that would give her the ability to teach lessons in Hindi.

When she was around twenty six years old, her parents arranged her marriage with a well known family. Unfortunately, her husband treated her so badly that she successfully sued for divorce on grounds of cruelty and returned to her parents' home. Fortunately for her, my father's forethought helped her live independently as a divorcee earning her livelihood both as a primary school teacher and as a private tutor in Hindi. She still remembers with love and gratitude the contributions of my father/ her foster grandfather in helping her become independent.

The second incident is more poignant and was a harder battle for my father. My Rukku atthe's (my father's next elder sibling, a sister) eldest daughter was born in early 1930's . As was the practice in traditional families of that time, she did not study beyond Std 6 . My atthe lived a couple of streets down from Devirammanni agrahara. This girl used to spend a lot of time in our home in Devarammanni agrahara and was one of my father pet nieces. She was married off to a boy from a well known family in Mysore at around eithteen years of age. Her husband was working in a mill in a small town near Mysore called Nanjanagudu. I remember visiting her house with my father. She had a son who was younger to me by six months. He was one of my childhood friends who unfortunately passed away in an accident in late 1980's.

In mid 1950's, her husband lost his job because the mill closed down. He then got a job in Bhilai in North East India. If my memory is correct, her son stayed behind with her

parents while she travelled to Bhilai to join her husband. Unfortunately, her husband fell ill and passed away within a couple of years of moving to Bhilai. My cousin came back to Bangalore as a widow and moved in with her parents. She didn't get any help or support from her husband's family in any way. As per the rituals and customs of religious Brahmin families, my atthe's family too imposed restrictions on their widowed daughter's life. While her brothers and uncles were supportive, it was difficult for them to change the mind set of her parents.

My father decided to take the bull by its horns. He argued with his sister and brother in law that their daughter deserved to be independent and make a life for herself.

He told them off for their conservative views on widowhood. He convinced them to let her prepare at home for the high school certificate examinations. He helped her in the subjects he taught and got help from her elder brother for other subjects. With help and encouragement from my father and her brother, she completed the SSLC examinations. My father then used his contacts to get her a job as an assistant in a private school near her house.

Thus she became an independent woman earning her livelihood. She served the school until her retirement in late 80's and still gets a pension for her service. Unfortunately for her, she lost her only son in mid 1980's. He died in an accident. My father's forethought had given her a means of support for life.

Here are couple more stories of my father's love and support for his nieces.

My father had two sisters. The eldest sister, my Janaki atthe was married to a well off family. She had six or seven daughters and a son who was the youngest child. Unfortunately for this atthe, her husband went into money lending business and lost the entire fortune. She also lost her

husband at an early age. Her only son ran away from home in his teens leaving his mother in poverty. By then all her daughters were married.

One of these daughters was married to a poor family. This niece of my father had seven or eight daughters and in the years when her children were young, this lady had a tough time bringing them up. She lived in a small town about 50km from Mysore. She used to visit Mysore off and on and would always spend a couple of days in our house on each visit. My father treated this niece as his own daughter and the end of each visit, he would give her help in cash or kind to assist her make both ends meet. I am very happy to record here that this lady's daughters were very independent young women. They all studied well and went into gainful employment. As a result, the later years of her life, this daughter of my atthe lived a peaceful and happy life.

As her lot started improving, she stopped visiting our house as she did not need my father's support as much as before. This lady used to visit her sister whenever she came to Mysore. This sister usually stayed with a close relative living a couple of houses down ours on the same street.

Sadly, when her lot improved, this daughter of my atthe who used to get lot of help regularly from my father would walk on the other side of our house without even acknowledging our father or his house. My parents were happy that their niece had a better life. However, they were deeply hurt by her attitude towards our family. Whenever they met this niece in various family occasions she would try to avoid them. However, they still treated her with the same love and affection, never complaining about her subsequent attitude towards them.

One of the other daughters from my eldest atthe was married to my father's cousin. They lived in a house on Kempananjamba Sgrahara, about two minutes walk from our house. One of her children, a boy between the ages of

three and four, used to spend most of his time at our house. My father was a great entertainer of children too and he was a favourite grandfather/ grand uncle (if there is such a word) to many of his nephews, nieces and their children in their childhood. This boy developed a lot of affection and attachment to my father. He would sleep three or four nights a week in our house, next to my father on his bed, listening to his creative and exciting bedtime stories. On a number of occasions, when he did not stay overnight at our house, I remember his father bringing this boy to our house in the middle of the night because his son was crying and wouldn't sleep at his house.

When this child was seven or eight, the family moved to Mumbai and the bond was broken. Had the family not moved, I am certain that this child would have grown up in our house.

A favourite chithya of his extended family by adoption as well.

My father had very close relationship with members of his adopted parents' families. To understand the context, I record here a bit of unpleasant history of my father's adopted family as I heard from my mother.

I could not verify this story as it happened decades before I was born. However, from my knowledge of our house and the adjacent house of my periya, my father's first cousin, there is evidence that this could be true at least to a certain extent.

My other grandfather (the one who adopted my father) as far as I can remember, had only one brother and no sisters. His family hailed from a village called Kalale, about 40kmfrom Mysore.

His father had a big corner house in Devamba Agrahara, a large tract of agricultural lands in a village called Purigali and a small parcel of agricultural land of about an acre in Sosale. My grandfather's parents died long before he adopted my father. Before his death, his father (my great grandfather)

decided to divide all the property equally between my grandfather and his elder brother. My grandfather was childless and his elder brother had at least two sons.

Because he had two children and my grandfather had none, I understand his elder brother was not in favour of equal division. He insisted on a two to one proportional share of the property in his favour. He was so adamant that he threatened his father, " if you wish to divide it equally, I will lie down on the dividing wall and you will have to build the wall over my dead body". I understand my grandfather was more interested in family harmony than in the property and asked his brother and father to agree on an appropriate division. As a result, I ended up growing in a house in Devamba Agrahara that had a single long veranda with two stairs and two entrances, one each to my house and to that of my father's first cousin's house. Likewise my grandfather inherited the small parcel of land in Sosale and his brother the larger tract of land in Purigali.

I know that my father's adopted parents spent most of their time with my father's family in Sosale and in Devirammanni Agrahara raising their nephews and nieces. It is my understanding that they moved into their house in Devamba Agrahara sometime before my birth and spent their last days in that house. By then, my grandfather's elder brother had passed away and his elder son was living in the portion of the house given to him. Both my parents and grandparents made every effort to maintain a joint family despite the dividing wall.

Even when they enclosed the veranda in 1950's with a four foot wall and a grill with two doors, one for each house, Ramu periya, my father's doddappa's son, his anna from the adopted family and my father did not partition the veranda because they preferred to live as far as possible as one joint family with a strong bonds between the two families. There was free movement of the children between the two houses. My father was a mentor to his cousin's children as well and

they in turn loved and respected him as an uncle and a guide. Despite the past history, my uncles who were actually first cousins to my father from his adopted family and my father were very close and enjoyed excellent relations.
Until 1962, when I was around twelve years old, there was no piped water in our house. We used to draw water from the well in our backyard and use it for all purposes. In 1958, Ramu periya got piped water from the city council to his house. The dividing brick wall at the back of our house, between our house and periya's house next door had a breach, about 8ft long and 3 ft high right near the place where Ramu periya had fitted a cistern, a washing stone and a tap for washing clothes. I remember my father and I crossing over the wall almost three four times a week and washing our clothes in the facility next door because it saved us the hassle of drawing water from our well and using it for washing clothes. One chore less meant ten pots of water less to be drawn! At times, my akkas, periya's daughters would wash my father's clothes and my father would sit on the half fallen wall and regale them with stories.

In 1962, we got piped water in our house and my father too built a cistern and a washing stone with a water tap for the washing area. early1960's, my uncle, Ramu periya built a house in the vacant corner of his house and rented out the old house to two tenants. But the use of the broken wall to transit between the two houses continued until 1966 when my periya's family moved to Bangalore after periyamma's death. Our cordial relations continued. Since his move to Bangalore, Ramu periya used to come to Mysore regularly and stayed at our house on every visit.

Love among his siblings

My father's was a very close knit family. There was abundant love and harmony among the siblings.

After the incident at Sosale, Rangaswamy periya, my father's elder brother who inherited my grandfather's family home

in Devarammanni Agrahara handed over the running if his family to my father until my father moved to his house in Devamba Agrahara. Even after that, my father used to visit his brother family every week and the two brothers would sit and talk for hours. He had implicit faith in my father and always listened to his advice bar a few exceptions. Even my father had a lot of love and respect for him.

My father told me of an incident when he took my Rangasamy periya to a movie. Those were the early days of bollywood and hindi films were made on stories from the epics Mahabharata and Ramayana. One such movie was Ram baan released in 1946 with Prem Adib and Shobhana Samarth in leading roles as Rama and Sita. It was screened in theatres in Mysore in 1948. Since the movie was based on Ramayana, a story very familiar to my periya, my father , our of love for his brother, took him to the movie theatre to see the film in the hope that his brother would be happy to see the picturised version of his favourite epic Ramayana.

My poor periya did not know anything about motion pictures or the make believe world of films. When he saw the character of Lord Rama appearing on the screen for the first time in the movie, he believed that Lord Rama, one of the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu, had come down from heaven.

I understand that every time Rama appeared on the screen, my periya would stand up with folded hands, chant hymns and prayers loudly in praise of the Lord and every now and then prostrate on the ground paying obeisance to Rama seen on the screen. Despite a lot of effort on my father's part to convince him, my periya would not believe him. Half way through the movie, my father had to drag my periya out of the theatre. My father used to tell me that this was the first and last film my periya ever saw in his life.

Coffee and tea are not native to India and therefore were not mentioned in any form in our scriptures and rituals. In the 1940's and 50's Hindu Brahmins never drank tea or coffee

in their lives. Being a devout and pious Iyengar Brahmin, Rangaswamy periya had never tasted coffee in his life. When he was very ill and was bedridden in early 1970's my father went to see him. My father thought that a good cup of coffee would bring him cheer. When my father told his brother that he should drink a cup of coffee, Rangaswamy periya's response was, "Raja, if you say it will help me, I will drink it".

He had so much faith in his younger brother that he was willing to drink coffee which was not permitted in a pure Brahmin diet.

The next male sibling younger to Rangaswamy periya was Gopalakrishna periya, who was a sub overseer, a government employee supervising constructions for the Public Works Department. He was quite well-off compared to his brothers. But, this never figured in my father's relations with him. His house was 20 minutes walk from Saradavilas High School. Some days my father would walk over to his place after school and the brothers would sit and talk. Almost once every fortnight, Gopalakrishna periya would come to our house to see my father. Gopalakrishna periya passed away in 1960 and my father took a long time to come to terms with his brother's loss. Gopalakrishna periya's sons were very close to my father. His eldest son took over our grandfather's house in Sosale.

My father used to visit sosale often and stay at the house. I have spent almost fifteen December vacation times in the house in Sosale. As I mentioned, the fact that my father was adopted never figured in his relations with his entire natural family of siblings, their children and other relatives.

The third sibling in order of age was my elder atthe Janakamma. In my childhood, she lived alone in her house in Sosale even after my athimber's death. I remember how she would demonstrate her love to her brother Raja whenever my father visited Sosale. Invariably, my father would visit Sosale during the harvest period in December. Rangaswamy periya

would also be visiting his nephews house in Sosale at the same time.

In villages that are situated on river banks, it is customary for all the Brahmin men to take bath in the river except during the rainy season when the rivers are flooded. Women from such families would generally bathe in the river on certain auspicious days of the Hindu almanac. Rangaswamy periya too followed this ritual of bathing in the Cauvery river whenever he was in Sosale. By the time he completed his morning prayers after bathing in the river, came back home and started the ritual prayers, it would be around 12 noon. The traditional Iyengar ritual prayers to Lord Vishnu is called Aaradhana. If one were to perform the Aaradhana as prescribed in the sacred scripts, it is quite elaborate and could take hours.

Rangaswamy periya being the eldest in the family, it was his prerogative to offer prayers and perform Aaradhana at our home in Sosale. Rangaswamy periya was a devout Iyengar and performed every bit of the Aaradhana as written in the scriptures. Traditionally, in religious families, lunch is not served until the Aaradhana is complete and the food prepared for lunch is offered to the deity at home. This meant that lunch would not be served at our home in Sosale before 3.00pm.
We youngsters were OK because we would eat the left overs of previous night's meal as breakfast where as the elders only had a cup of coffee and no breakfast. Rangaswamy periya did not drink coffee or tea or have breakfast throughout his life of 78 years.

My father's sister Janakamma was aware of that my father was used to eating lunch at 10:00 am. She loved him very much because when he was born, she was around eight years old and she had looked after my father and his younger brother with lot of love and care. She would therefore prepare a substantial snack at about 10:00 am and wait outside her house. As soon as she saw my father returning

from the river after bath, she would call him to her house, close the door, make him sit in a place away from the window and give him the snack in a plate to eat quietly saying, “my elder brother does not understand that you are used to eating at 10:00 am. You need to eat on time or you will spoil your health. Eat these snacks so that you can have a meal after Rangasami finishes Aaradhana”. I know this to be true because I have joined my father many times to eat the snacks at Janaki atthe’s house in Sosale. As she grew older, she moved to her youngest daughter’s house in Mysore. As long as she was able to move around, she used to come home to visit my father.

She developed dementia in her 90’s. She would recognise people off and on. All her talk was of my father’s youth. My father had passed away. My mother had gone to visit my Janaki atthe in Mysore. She recognised my mother. She had lost the memory of my father death.

She told my mum, “my Raja will be coming from school. What are you doing here? go home and prepare some snack and coffee for him. My brother will be tired and hungry after teaching. Tomorrow, I am going to cook his favourite dish pooshni kai moru kolambu (a very tasty watery dish made from white pumpkin or ash gourd, yoghurt and south Indian spices). Ask him to pass by and eat it in the evening”. When my mother spoke to her daughter, she said that her mother would always be talking about Raja mama, his childhood, his drama etc. Such was the bond of love between my father and his sisters.

The other sister to my father was Rukku atthe . Her name was Rukmini. She was married to a very well read scholar Chakravarty Tirumalachar. She lived in Veene shamanna street, about half a kilometer from Devirammanni Agrahara. She was my father’s immediate elder sibling. Whenever there was a ceremony or a function in our house, Rukku atthe would be the main help. She was very close to my father and at the same time respected him for his strong personality.

Generally, she would seek my father's advice on all matters and would act accordingly. There were two instances of discord between her and my father.

The first one was concerning one of her son's marriage. She had talked to my father about the girl she intended her son to marry. Since my father knew the girl's family and background, he had advised her against it. However, my father's elder brother's wife, my periyamma was keen on this alliance. She advised Rukku atthe to go ahead with the engagement. My atthe did not inform my father and she performed the engagement ceremony behind my father's back. When my father came to know, he was very upset not because she went ahead with the alliance but, because she did not inform him about the engagement and invite him. My atthe came home to appease him. They exchanged a lot of words and there were heated arguments for over an hour. My father told her that he would not be attending the marriage. This broke my atthe's heart. She was in tears and started crying. My father could not see her crying. He too started crying. The brother and sister cried and made up.

A similar situation occurred when her another son decided to marry my chikkamma, my mother's younger sister. My atthe was not happy about the alliance in the mistaken belief that my mother's family had already fixed the marriage before asking her permission. It was now her turn to reject the alliance. She expressed her displeasure vividly to my parents. My mother was in tears because she was innocent and did not even know about the proposal. Once again, the brother and sister quarrelled, cried and made up. The wedding went on smoothly, These incidents clearly showed us the depth of love and affection between my father and his sisters.

Almost identical to Janaki atthe's last days, even Rukku atthe went into dementia in her last days. She did not remember that my father had passed away almost a decade earlier. She was always remembering her brother Raja. She would expect

him to come home to her place in the evenings after school . She would ask her daughter to prepare my father's favourite snacks saying that he would be hungry after work and she would like to feed him. Even though both sisters had six brothers, the one they remembered most was the one that was closest to them and that was my father.

My father's third brother counting from the eldest was Srirangachar, a well known advocate in Mysore. Srirangachar or Sriranga periya to me, and my father looked like twins. The difference was very minimal except for the height. My father was 6ft 1inch tall where as Sriranga periya was 6ft 3 inches tall.

The resemblance left many people who did not know them well confused. Many a time, my father's students would see periya walking on the road and as per the custom in Mysore, greet him with folded hands "namaskara sir" meaning I bow to thee my teacher. Sriranga periya would wave his hand and walk along.

Likewise, my father would at times be accosted by a client of Sriranga periya and he would start discussing the case currently in the court where my periya would be representing him. My father would politely tell the man, "I am going somewhere on an errand. Please see me at my office in the evening" and walk away. When the client met my uncle in the evening, he would start reminding him about the chat that morning. Sriranga periya would realise that the client had met my father and would ask him to go over the discussion so that he can make notes. I have personally witnessed this on some of my trips to the market with my father.

The two brothers were very close to each other. Their bonds of brotherly love was unique. Not a day passed when these two did not see each other. Their daily meeting was a lovely demonstration of mutual love and respect.
Every day, in the morning at around 8:00 am, my father would walk down the distance of one km to Sriranga periya's house

on Narayanasastry Road. As soon as one entered periya's house, there was a veranda with a concrete bench built into the wall on the left, the main door to the house in front on the veranda facing the street and on the right, periya's office with a big work desk and chairs on either side. Periya would normally be with a client or two. As the veranda had a big open arch behind the concrete bench to allow light and breeze. Periya's office door would always be open. There was another connecting door from his office to the living room. Normally, at that time my periyamma would be on the settee in the living room.

Periya would leave the daily newspaper on the bench. My father would walk in, sit cross legged on the concrete bench and start reading the news paper. When periya saw him, he would say , "Oh Raja you have come". He would stop the meeting, go into the house through the door in his office, and ask periyamma , "Raja has come. Is coffee ready?". As this was the daily routine, periyamma would have kept a small steel tumbler full of coffee ready. Periya would warm it, take it through the main door to give it to my father before going back to his office. Around 8:45 am,my father would fold the newspaper, get up, call out to my periya who would be busy with his clients in his office saying, "OK. I am leaving now". This was the usual conversation in 99 out of 100 days.

But, if my father missed a morning, Sriranga periya, riding his bicycle with the seat raised six inches above normal to accommodate his long legs, would come to our house in the evening and ask my mother or one of us, "I don't remember seeing Raja this morning. Is everything fine? Is he OK?"

To me, it felt as though the two brothers had in such a strong bond of love that they did not feel the need to talk to each other. They were content and happy just to see each other every day. What love between the brothers!

I recall a trip to Tamilnadu with Sriranga periya. When Sriranga periya's daughter in law lost one of her parents,

as per tradition, periya had to go to their place in the city of Kumbakonamin Tamilnadu, around 350 km from Mysore, to offer condolences. One of his clients had given periya a car and a driver for the journey. Sriranga periya , on one of those rare occasions when the brothers talked to each other during their morning meetings had asked my father to come along as he was going alone. He could have taken any of his brothers. But, my father was his favourite too. I remember that on the day of the trip, early in the morning, periya came to our house in the car to pick my father. I was in the eigth class (standard eight or year eight of schooling) at that time and around eleven years old. Periya asked me, “do you want to come?”. It was the beginning of the school holidays and I was excited to go. I said I would and my father said, come along. This was my first ever trip to Tamilnadu, that too in a car, sitting in the front , next to the driver! What more could I want?

I recall that the route to Kumbakonam passed via Karur and we spent a couple of hours visiting my step mother’s family and her cousins. Thinking back, I feel that Sriranga periya was aware of my father close links with his first wife and that family was known to periya as well. He therefore used the trip to give my father, without offending him, an opportunity to visit them. Periya also knew that my father could not afford a travel to Karur on a social visit. This was a very sensible and subtle way of expressing his love to his brother.

In addition to my sister and I, the youngest two daughters of Sriranga periya were my father’s pride and joy. He was their uncle, friend and guide. They were studying History and Kannada respectively at the university. He closely monitored their progress guiding them, helping them with their researches and discussing points of view and opinions. Even today, after almost 60 years, these two sisters remember my father fondly and affectionately.

My father’s immediate next elder brother was Krishnaswamy Iyengar or affectionately known to me as Kidsamy periya. He was a Deputy Director of Public Instructions with the

Ministry of Education and had a transferable job. He lived in various cities in Karnataka. He too was a very affectionate brother to my father. He used to visit our house regularly. His youngest daughter's alliance was fixed with a boy from a family in Mandya, about 50 km from Mysore. Kidsamy periya arranged and celebrated the engagement ceremony in our house. After his retirement, Kidsamy periya built a house in Hanumantha Nagar in Bangalore. Starting with the gruhapravesham of this house, I have accompanied my father to visit and stay in his house many times. When my father moved to Bangalore in 1971, until his death in 1974, we had two family homes in Bangalore, one our home and the other Kidsamy periya's home.

After my father death in 1974, Kidsamy periya became a foster father to our family. His wife, my periyamma and his sons gave us a lot of support and love. Especially to my younger sisters and brother, Kidsamy periya and periyamma gave so much love and affection that they filled the void in their lives left by my father's demise. It was a great loss to our family too when he passed away in 1981 or 82.

My father had only one younger brother Sundararaja Iyengar or my Sundra chithya. Sundra chithya, in his teens, moved to Sriranga periya's house and grew up there. But, that in no way reduced the mutual love and affection between my father and his brother. I still remember chithya coming to our house on the day my father passed away and exclaimed in grief, "today I have really become an orphan". My father and Sundra chithya used to meet on all family occasions, festivals and gatherings. Every couple of weeks, my father would meet him in his office in Shivarampet in Mysore.

In conclusion, we as a family have enjoyed abundant love and affection from my father's siblings and their children. We are in touch with almost all our cousins who are still alive including those of Ramu periya, my father's cousin from his adopted parents side. We continue to be a close knit family. This is because of the everlasting bonds my father created

with every member of his extended family of brothers sisters, uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces and their children too. One of the most important lessons I learnt from my father was the importance of nurturing and maintaining interpersonal relations within the family.

CHAPTER 8

Rajagopala Iyengar, a truly enlightened contented soul

I have never heard my father complain about lack of money or luxuries in his life. He never regretted his lack of economic prosperity. He never hesitated in sharing whatever he had with others without thinking of his own needs or that of his family. From the day he started earning until his retirement, his main source of income was his salary as a teacher. But for Rangsami periya, all the other brothers were financially better off than my father. But, this disparity was neither felt nor displayed in his bonds of love and relations with his brothers. It felt as though this disparity was non existent.

Right from a young age, my father had to shoulder the responsibility of bringing up his brother Rangaswamy Iyengar's family. By the time they grew up and settled in their lives, he had his wife and children to look after. In addition to this he brought up my mother's younger brother and her sister each for about four years. He also helped out his nephews and nieces. If this was not enough, additional demands on the purse were from shraddhas, marriages, naming ceremonies, weddings and deaths of close relatives both in Mysore and in other towns near and far. All this he managed cheerfully without a complaint or a sigh from his salary as a teacher in a private school, cutting corners, pawning jewellery, never approaching his more affluent brothers for help.

Since the time I understood basic family finances, I knew that it was a hard struggle to make both ends meet. We had a decent home to live in, thanks to my grandparents who adopted my father. The small parcel of land was leased out

to a farmer Nanja in Sosale as per the accepted custom where he would grow the crop and give us a third of the yield keeping two thirds for himself. The land produced about five to six quintals of paddy every year. In return, my father as the owner of the land paid taxes and also paid for the seeds to sow. Every year, in December, my father would go to Sosale to collect the paddy. In later years, we had a couple of cows in our house and the farmer would bring a cartload of hay and a bag of rice in a bullock cart from Sosale to our house in Mysore. Nanja always told the usual story of crop failing, not enough yield, no money for fertilisers etc. at the time of harvest and got away with giving just one quintal of paddy instead of the agreed one third of the yield.

The reasons were obvious to my father. Nanja had two sons and three daughters. He lived in a thatched hut with no electricity or water. The sons were wayward and did not help the family in any way. This land was the sole source of livelihood and he had to look after his family, and get his daughters married from whatever excess food he could grow. My father would tell him, “It is alright. You can give me more next year to compensate for the deficit”. That compensation never materialised nor did my father ask for it at any time. In the early 1960’s, the Government brought a new legislation, “Tiller is the owner of the land” under which absentee landlords like my father would hand over their land to the tenant, thus ending the age old custom of tenancy of farming lands. It was a well meant legislation to benefit the farmer and to give them an opportunity to be independent owners instead of being serfs. The government also announced that those landowners who lost their land under this scheme would be given a compensatory amount. My father was very happy to hand over the land and Nanja became the owner of the lands he had farmed.

After a couple of years, I think in 1965, my father and I had gone to Sosale for a temple function. Nanja came over to meet us. He asked my father for some money to buy food. When my father questioned him about his earnings from the

land, he was in tears. He said that after two years of owning the land, as he was growing old, his sons asked him to register the land in their names so that they could continue farming. He believed them and gave them the land. They then sold the land and squandered the money in drinking and gambling. He threw them out of his hut. He then started working as a daily labour in other farms and was struggling to live.

My father had only fifteen rupees in his pocket . The bus fare from Sosale to Mysore for both of us was three rupees. My father gave Nanja ten rupees from the money he had and told him that he will bring him some clothes and money the next time round which he did. On the bus journey home, my father was very quiet and thoughtful. I asked him why? He replied , "All schemes introduced by the government will not help the intended target population because in most cases, dishonest and greedy people will take advantage of the innocent recipients. I feel very sad for Nanja. I wish I could do more". There was another important reason why the episode with Nanja stayed in my memory. There is another incident related to this event. To meet the expenses of Rangsamy periya's daughter, my father, in 1940's, had mortgaged the parcel of land he inherited with Janaki atthe's husband in his name . He cleared the loan. However, my father did not deem it important to get the documents changed back to his name before his brother in law passed away. As a result , when he lost the land because of new government regulations, he could not get the compensation because the land was, on paper, still under mortgage. When my father learnt about it, he asked his nephew, my anna, Gopalakrishna periya's son, who used to live in Sosale to investigate.

When my cousin told him that he could not get the documents rectified, my father said philosophically, "It was just a piece of land. I have enjoyed its fruits for a number of years. I do not need more". He believed in the karma philosophy that if the money was his, he would get it. If not, he wouldn't. So why worry?

As I mentioned, there were too many demands on my father's meagre purse and it was always a struggle to make both ends meet.

Here is a typical example of my father's monthly finance. Salary was paid in cash and not by cheque or bank account. From the age of nine until fourteen, I accompanied my father on his monthly shopping trip on the first of every month. The first stop would be grocery shop named 'City supplies' in Santhepete (crudely translated to a market street where groceries from the weekly markets from surrounding villages are bought by shopkeepers and sold in their shops), where we had a monthly account for groceries and coffee powder. The shopkeeper, a very polite middle aged gentleman in a black Gandhi cap and a kurta would greet my father, "namaskar meshtre" meaning greetings, teacher. He would then give my father a handwritten bill for the previous month's purchases. Depending upon the coming month's commitments, my father would pay him between 70% and 90% of the billed amount. No explanation was needed and the shopkeeper never complained as he respected my father as a person. My father would then give him a list of groceries needed for that month which would initially be sufficient to feed us for about twenty days. Promptly, a new account for the current month would be opened with the balance brought forward from the previous month. As I grew older, towards the end of each month, my mother would send me to the shop to buy groceries on account and this would be added on to the account. This system was repeated every month. I do not recall any time when the account was not in red except in April 1965.

My elder sister's wedding was fixed to take place in the third week of April 1965. My father did not have the funds to celebrate the marriage. In March, he took a loan of five thousand rupees from the cooperative society to cover the expenses. On that first day of April, the entire bill presented by the grocer was settled in full and all groceries for the wedding ordered and paid for. We had left over groceries

from the wedding that was lasted until late May. I was sent to the shop in June to buy groceries on account. Thus, by first of July, we were back in the old order of 'account always being in red'.

When my father retired in 1969, before moving to Davanagere, he settled the outstanding amount in full using his retirement benefit lump sum called provident fund. I remember that he paid in 1970, the last instalment for the repayment of the loan he had taken for my sister's wedding in 1965. His net financial savings after almost forty years of teaching service was an outstanding loan of one hundred rupees.

Coming back to details of monthly finances, after settling the grocery bill, my father and I would then walk down towards the market. The shopping from now on would be in cash. No credit. Opposite the market, on the corner of Santhepete, there were a group of oil merchants who had all types of cooking oils stored in cans, drums and urns. We had to carry our own jugs and bottles. Our next visit would be to buy essential cooking oils in jugs we had brought with us. Like the grocery store, we would leave the purchased goods at the shop for collection on our way back. The next step would be purchasing of vegetables for a week or two , coconut and seasonal fruits. At this stage, my father would engage a helper (common name coolie) who would have a huge round flat basket to carry the purchases.

During such market trips, my father always bought me two of my favourite items as a small boy. One was a small packet of mixed nuts, dry fruits and candied sugar pieces called Brahmachari. Brahmachari in Sanskrit means an unmarried bachelor. I am yet to figure out why a packet of dry fruits was called a Brahmachari!

The other was one tender coconut chopped and opened, ready to drink as in a cup. Straws were unheard of those days. While I got the Brahmachari without asking, until the

age of twelve, I had to always tug my father's kurta and show him the hand sign of drinking water from an earthen pot to indicate that I wanted a tender coconut. He would invariably ignore my request, knowingly avoid the coconut sellers area and shop for the house in other areas until I dragged him in exasperation to the coconut sellers. He would then feign surprise at my request saying, "why didn't you ask me earlier?" and buy me a tender coconut. I always knew that I would get a tender coconut and he also was more than happy to buy me one. However, the drama had to be enacted every time.

After the shopping in the market, we would walk home with the coolie carrying the groceries, vegetables and fruits. I would carry two of the oil jugs and my father would carry a bag of rice and a bag of wheat.

My father would leave the money remaining from the salary in the inner pocket of his black Khadi (hand woven) woollen waist coat. Part of this money would be spent on fuel like kerosene, charcoal and firewood. Another part would be spent on buying daily supply of milk and on buying fresh greens and vegetables from street hawkers. Whatever little was left would be for my father's and my bus fare to school. Ten rupees would be set aside for emergencies.
My father was a teacher at Saradavilas High School and I was a student at that school from age eleven to fourteen. Both of us had to go to school every morning during term time. I was given bus fare every day to go to school as it was about four km from home. We never left home at the same time nor did we return at the same time. Therefore, I was blissfully unaware of the sacrifices my father made so that I could travel both ways by bus.

My father would walk one way to school for the first two weeks and come back by bus. For the next two weeks, he would walk both ways because he didn't have enough money for bus fare. But, he did not want me to walk to school. Neither of my parents ever mentioned this to me. I realised it

myself years later, after my father's death.

I joined Saradavilas College in June 1963 for the one year pre-university course which was the pre-qualifier for professional and undergraduate courses. Since my father was a teacher in an institution under the same main body, the College had allowed him to pay the fees in instalments convenient to him. I think, the fees was around two hundred rupees per year. Because of the structure of lessons, I had to travel to College at different times during the week and travelling by bus was not convenient. Being an immature teenager of fourteen years, without realising the financial burden on my father, I expressed a strong desire to buy a bicycle, mainly because my friends from Devamba agrahara who were my classmates had bought their bicycles.

My father knew about teenagers and peer pressure. He took me to Bhavsar cycle company and bought me a Raleigh bicycle on hire purchase. The total cost of the bicycle with trimmings worked out to seventy two rupees. My father paid twelve rupees as initial payment and made arrangements with the shop to pay the remaining sixty rupees at the rate of ten rupees a month for six months.

From 1964 to 1969, I was a recipient of the National merit cum loan scholarship which was sixty rupees per month for the first four years from June1963 to May 1967.

However, I had applied for the scholarship in June 1963 and the grant was announced in January 1964. From then on, the scholarship amount was paid in arrears at the end of each academic year in a lump sum. As the authorities in the College knew my father as a well known teacher at the school my best introduction was "Rajagopala Iyengar's son". Therefore, at the end of each academic year until 1967, the accounts department from the College sent for me to come and sign for receipt of the scholarship amount and after deducting all the prescribed fees, the balance in cash money would be sent across to my father at the school next door. My father used a

big chunk of the scholarship amount to ensure that I had all the necessary clothes, books, pocket money, my summer trip to Kanamanapalli and winter trips to Sosale.

I am happy that I was able to contribute a small sum of money to the family kitty and that expenses towards my education was not a burden to my father.

The biggest life lesson to me was my father's contentment. He never lamented or regretted the lack of money in his life. He did not aspire for luxuries or riches. He willingly made the sacrifices out of love and affection. He empathised with people who were less fortunate and went out of his way to help them happily sharing whatever little he had.
At the same time, he had certain principles. He did not want to borrow money from his brothers or friends. He never asked his siblings for any financial help. I remember Kidsamy periya telling him that there was a site vacant next to his house in Bangalore, that it would cost four thousand rupees and that my father should buy it so that it will be useful later as a source of money when the children grow up. He even offered to advance the money to my father without interest. My father replied, "No ,Kidsamy. I do not want to take a loan from you. I am not interested in acquiring additional property. God, through my father has given me a roof over my head and he will help me find the money when I need it".

My father had helped many students during their high school education and a good number of them had come up in life. They held responsible positions in industries and businesses. If he wished to, he could have asked them for favours that would help him with his financial woes. He never even thought of approaching them. To him, it was his duty as a teacher and a person to help and not expect any returns.
I remember another episode in my life as a student. I completed my bachelor's degree in Mathematics and Physics from Saradavilas College in 1967. I had already obtained admission into a Master's programme in Mathematics at Manasa Gangothri, the post graduate centre of the University

of Mysore in Mysore city. However, I was very keen on doing a Master's in Astronomy. I had applied to Osmania University in Hyderabad, the only university in South India those days that offered the Master's course in Astronomy and I was offered a place.

This meant that I had to leave Mysore, stay in a hostel in Hyderabad five hundred kms away, study and come home twice a year during holidays.

I sat with my father and worked out the cost. My National scholarship award for Master's was seventy five rupees a month. The total expense per month for the course including the trips home was estimated at an average of ninety rupees a month , a difference of fifteen rupees a month. My father sat me down and for the first time in my life, he explained the family situation to me. He said that he might not be able to afford the additional fifteen rupees I needed every month. He was not in any way ashamed to admit it. He said with dignity and pride, " I wish I could give you the extra money you need. I will not be able to send you the money every month and this might put you in a difficult situation as your budget is pared to the bone. While I am very unhappy to disappoint you, you are at an age where I need to teach you to be realistic. Since you already have a place to do a Master's here in Mysore, you should accept it".

Since the time I joined Saradavilas College in 1963, my father gradually let go of me subtly changing the dynamics of our father son relationship to that of a friend. We never talked much. My father never asked me about my courses or my grades. We used to discuss current issues, books I read, and other general issues. The issue of the Master's programme was the first time ever in my life that my father said "NO" to my wishes and he was justified. I accepted his recommendation and enrolled into the Master programme in Mathematics.

I was thankful for the decision later in 1967 because of

what happened in my father's career and more so because this decision transformed my life at a later date into an unbelievable success story.

In 1966, Saradavilas High School became an aided institution meaning that teachers and ancillary staff were considered government employees and the salaries were paid by the government. In 1967, my father was due for his promotion as a headmaster and at the same time, he had attained his retirement age. There was a provision for extension of service by two years.

My father had applied to the Government for the extension and decision had not come through. As a result, in August 67, he was temporarily discharged from service as there was no decision about his promotion or his retirement. For about five months, he was paid fifty percent of his last salary. Fortunately, my sisters and brother were very young and their schooling was free. My Master's was paid for. However, it was a hard time financially at home. I then took up private tutoring in Maths to high school students to supplement the family income.

I used to give tuitions in the morning from 7 am to 9 am and then go to the university for classes. Whatever little money I earned, went a long way in supporting the family.
In retrospect, I was glad that I did not go to Hyderabad as it would have resulted in my leaving the course because of finances. My scholarship would then be withdrawn as I did not complete my course and my future would have been very bleak indeed.

In January 1968, the extension came through and so did his promotion. My father worked as the headmaster until his retirement in June 1969.

In early 1969, my father suffered a heart attack. Thanks to good medical care, he recovered well and decided to retire from his job at Saradavilas High School and accept the easier

job of a Governor for the great-grandchildren of Rajanahalli Hanumanthappa, the owner of several thriving industries in Davanagere. My family shifted to Davanagere in August 1969. Until his move to Bangalore in 1972, he worked in Davanagere. The Hanumanthappa family had a lot of respect and regard for my father and he had a very happy and peaceful three years at Davanagere.

By then, I had completed my Master's in Mathematics and had joined Belgaum Military School as a teacher in Mathematics on a temporary appointment of one academic year. I did visit Davanagere once or twice from Belgaum.

In May 1970, I had to leave Belgaum Military School as it was an ad-hoc vacancy for one year. I moved to Bangalore. I then got a job as a teacher at Bangalore Military School in June 1971. I was also given living accommodation in the school campus. My father left Davanagere in March 1972 and the family shifted to Bangalore and lived with me from then on until I moved overseas in April 1978. It was no surprise that the Hanumanthappa family wanted him to stay longer. However, my father felt that his health was not as good and decided to leave. His employers were very understanding and gave him a great farewell too.

CHAPTER 9

The final years of a great soul

In 1972, I was twenty-three years old and was working as a quasi-permanent teacher of Mathematics at the then Bangalore Military School. To be considered for permanent employment and promotions, it was mandatory that I should have a teaching degree in addition to my postgraduate degree. I joined RV Teachers' College on a two-year part-time teacher training degree. I used to work at school from 8:00 am until 4:00 pm and then catch a bus to attend evening lessons at the College. I used to return around 10:00 pm. My father was very happy that I had joined the degree course leading to the degree of a Bachelor of Education. He used to chat with me about teaching practice and new methodologies of teaching. I passed my B.Ed with a first class and he was very proud of me.

After moving to Bangalore, my father suffered two more heart attacks between 1972 and 1974. He was strong enough to survive these. He was mobile and independent until July 1974. He then became bedridden. He was in and out of Dr. Bhaktaram's heart clinic on Richmond Road. My income was limited and it was used to run the family. My parents used my father's savings, his pension and whatever little that was left from his provident fund to pay the hospital bills. I cannot recall a single time when my father asked me to settle the bills.

When the family moved to Bangalore, my younger siblings were fourteen, twelve and nine years old respectively. They joined different schools and Colleges in Bangalore to continue their education. My father supplemented whatever amount I gave to my mother for running the family with

his pension. We were back to my father's younger days of perpetual shortage of funds. He never complained and nor did my mother or my siblings.

My father was content with my future as well. His thoughts were that I was in a permanent pensionable job in the Ministry of Defence, Government of India.

My father was keenly aware of the burden on my young shoulders. He was very unhappy about it. At the same time, he was confident of the values he had instilled in me. I do not think I let him down.

Once he was bed ridden, I used to have long chats with him about family matters. He would reminisce about his life. I would tell him about my career and my job. We became close once again. But, there was one snag. Right from childhood, I was my father's favourite child and the apple of his eye. In his last years, he wanted me to be with him in Bangalore all the time.

While he was not scared to die, he was concerned that he might pass away in my absence. On official duty from my School, I used to travel twice a year to Delhi, once in December and once in May escorting the boarders on their journey home by train. The entire return journey would take six days. Once I reached Delhi, I had to give a completion report at the Army Headquarters and return.

I used to ask for two or three day's leave (to be deducted from my annual allocation of 12 days) to see Delhi, Agra etc. I was still a bachelor, could not afford to travel on my own and therefore wished to use the opportunity to do some sightseeing. My wife's eldest sister who is related to us otherwise as well lived in Delhi and I used to stay at her place on every visit. Invariably, within twenty four hours of arriving in Delhi, my sisters would send a telegram, "Father ill or serious. Return immediately" . Mobile phones were at least three decades away. Telephone service was restricted

to offices and high income group households. Therefore, there was no way I could call home. I would then rush back, travelling in unreserved trains despite holding a first class ticket paid for by the government. My father would be waiting anxiously. Once I was back, he would become better overnight. I think out of five or six trips I made, I managed to do some sightseeing in only one winter trip.

My father was bedridden in August 1974. However, his bodily functions were managed well using drugs. His kidney was working below par and he had to have diuretics to flush out excess fluid. This was expected in patients who suffered heart attacks and survived. However, he was in full control of his mental faculties and continued to be the person he was, happy, affectionate, jovial and a great story teller.

I vividly recall last two days of his life. The night before he passed away was the ninth day of Navaratri, the ten day Hindu festival. At night, after supper we chatted for a while and I was off as I was on duty in the boarding house until lights out at 10:30 pm. He and my mother continued chatting. He told her “I am not going to be around after tomorrow. I know I am placing a huge burden on my son. But, you do not have to worry Vaidehi. My Son will look after you all”. My mother admonished him for his morbid thoughts.

Next morning, on the last day of Dasara or Navarathri celebrated as the Vijaya Dashami festival, over coffee, my mother repeated what he had said to her. I then told my father not to think on those lines. The big festival of Deepavali was three weeks away. I told him that we will get a cook to prepare his favourite sweet dish and that we will have a grand Deepavali at home. He just smiled. I went off to work.

As it was a holiday for state schools and Colleges, all my siblings were at home. At around 10:00 am, my father asked my sisters to telephone his brother Kidsami to come over and see him, There was a call booth in the market nearby. My sisters rang Kidsami periya at home and passed the message.

He told them that he would come over after lunch. When my sisters came back and informed my father, he remarked, “it might be too late”. He went to sleep at about 11:00 am. I came home early for lunch at about 12:15 pm and tried to wake him up. He was not responding. I called up the doctor from the school hospital. He came over, checked and pronounced him dead. It was too late for Kidsami periya that day.

My father passed away peacefully in his sleep and he knew two days before that he would not live beyond that day.

My father’s demise left a void in me. This is true of any father and son. I am no exception. I am proud and honoured to be known as Rajagopala Iyengar’s son. Without making it obvious, he has given me such a wealth of attributes that to day, I am able to deal with various situations in life with fortitude, compassion, courage and understanding.

My narration might make my father a saint. He was not a saint. He had his shortcomings like everyone else. For example, he had the habit of using snuff. While he accepted that a person could be educationally challenged, he had scant respect for those who did not try or make a genuine effort. Sometimes, he would pull the legs of youngsters without realising that some of them could be very sensitive to certain jokes. But, his qualities and values outweighed his shortcomings.

He has been a beacon of light to many lives including mine. He lives not only in the hearts of his family but also in the hearts of hundreds of his students.

IN CONCLUSION

My father was not a devout Srivaishnava. He was very liberal In his Outlook. He used to go to ishwara temple on shivaratri. He used to visit St. Philomena's church during Christmas and offer prayers. He was a close friend to some Muslim fruit merchants. He would go to their houses to greet them during idd. He did not eat in their houses as they ate meat. However, he would drink a cup of milk or a glass of juice and eat fruits offered by them.

I have never seen him practice untouchability . He was a highly liberated soul when compared to his contemporaries. His religious beliefs were embodied in the following verse which he chanted regularly.

युम शैवाह समुपास्यथे शिवा इति, ब्रह्मेती वेदान्तिनो, बौद्धा बुद्द इति प्रमानपटवह, कर्तेती नैययिकाह ।
अर्हन नित्यथ जैन शासना रथाह, कर्मेती मीमाम्सकाह ।
श्रोयम भो विदधातु वान्छित फलम त्रैलोक्य नाथो हरिही ।

(yum shaivaah samupasyathe shiva ithi, brahmethi vedaantino, bouddha Buddha ithi pramaanapatavaha, karthethi Naiyayikaaha. Arhan nithyatha jaina shasana rathaha, karmethi meemamsakaha. Shroyam bho vidhadathu Vanchhitha phalam thrailokya Natho harihi)

Meaning

The shaivaites worship him as Shiva. Those who pursue Vedanta worship him as Brahma. The Buddhists worship him as Buddha. Those who follow the Nyaya school of philosophy worship him as Kartha. The followers of Jainism call him Arhanta. Those who analyse the philosophies propounded by the Vedas address their Supreme being as Karma.Whatever the name, the lord of the three world Sri Hari will bestow upon us the desired boons. He also used to

quote the two addenda to the above verse from Dr Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, ex-President of India, to include Islam and Christianity.

My father strongly believed in one God- many paths theology that embraced all religions and philosophies. (I have tried to find on the web, the added lines from Dr. Radhakrishnan. Unfortunately I have not been able to locate them.)

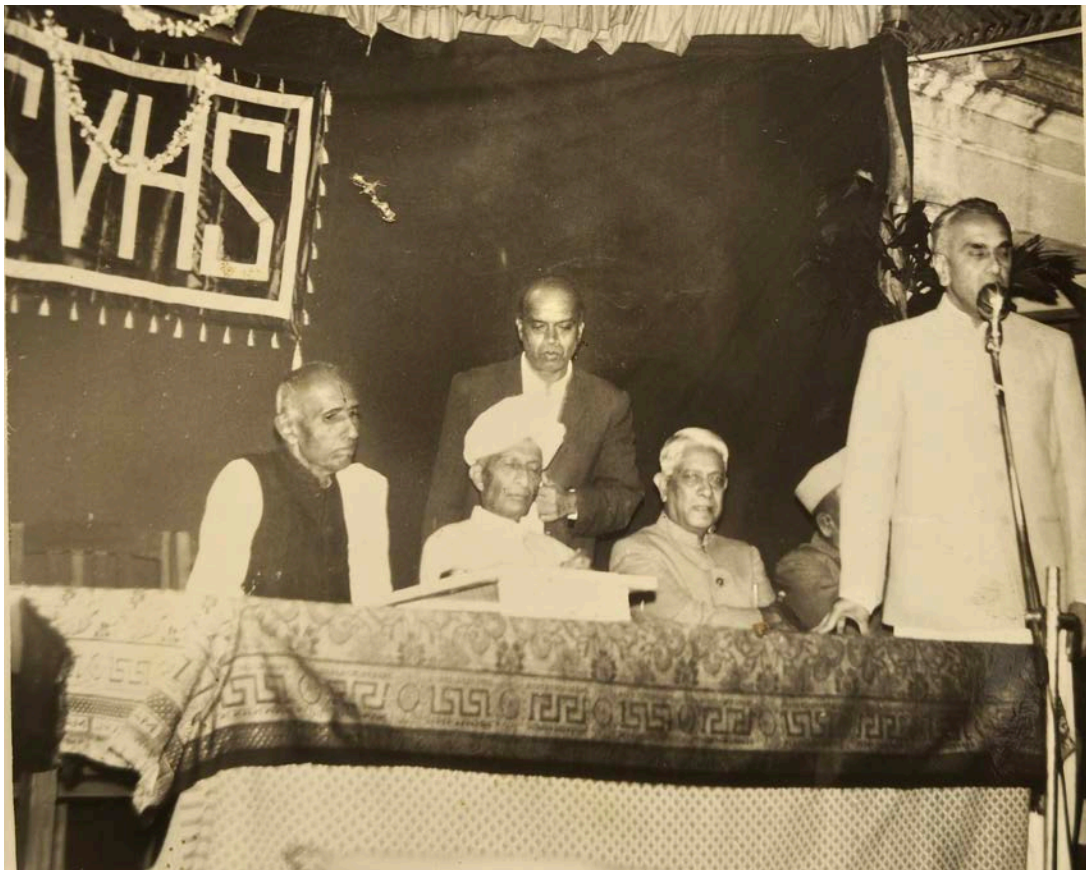
I conclude with the universal prayer for peace

Om Shanti Shanti Shantihi

Appendix II

SOME PICTORIAL MEMORIES

Retirement ceremony felicitations circa 1969



Rajagopala Iyengar as an amateur theatre artist

One of the surviving photographs of the amature theatre group from 1950's in which Sri Sosale Rajagopala Iyengar (first left sitting down in the picture) portrayed the role of Duryodhana in the play "Rannana Gadaayuddha".

The actor holding a bow is Ashwatthama portrayed by Sri Kaushik, who was his student and the librarian at Sarada Vilas High School.

Family photograph of Sosale Rajagopala Iyengar on the occasion of his eldest daughter's wedding in April'65.

From the left on chair: Smt. Vaidehi Rajagopala Iyengar, Sri Sosale Rajagopala Iyengar, Smt Vasudha Raju(nee Vasudha Sosale) and Sri Sosale Mohana

Sitting on the ground in the front: Kum. Vani(Smt. Vani Ramdas Rao), Chi. Sosale Vallabha, Kum. Usha(Smt. Usha Jagannath)

Ancestoral house of Sosale Rajagopala Iyengar inherited from adopted parents

Front facade of Sri Sosale Rajagopala Iyengar's house as it was until 1970's at 415, Devamba Agrahara, Mysore. In the picture are his eldest son and other 3 younger children.

Kaiser! Not royalty from Germany but the first dog in Rajagopala Iyengar's family

The only surviving picture of the beloved dog Kaiser on whom Sri Sosale Rajagopala Iyengare wrote "The ode to Kaiser" in Sanskrit.

The little girl in the picture is Renuka, the daughter of Smt. Padmasini, my mother's younger sister who lived with us for four years during her high school studies and Sri S.Chellappa. As a child, Renuka used to stay with us often at our house in Bangalore Military School.

The only place where Rajagopala Iyengar worked for his entire career of about 40 years as a teacher

The photographs above were taken in early 2025 by which time the great institution of Sarada Vilas High School for boys had closed down after a glorious century and more. The picture at the top shows the facade of the school building taken from the east, facing west. I am pleased to note that since then the school has reopened as a private elite school in Mysore following the CBSE curriculum.

Grandfather as seen by father…
Father as seen by me…

These two books are not only a description of the extraordinary lives of two great personalities, but also a record of cultural and social transformations that have taken place in the last century.

While the life of Sosale Rangappa in pre-independent India appears to be ordinary, it reflects the cooperation, friendship and adventurous lives of people of India through Rangappa's life, leading one to be amazed at how such personalities lived.

Sosale Rajagopala Iyengar despite being a high school teacher had a wide understanding and depth of knowledge. I addition to teaching his students with love and devotion he also ensured that his students were exposed to ideas beyond the classroom and he instilled positive values as useful members of the society, thus making the readers of his story wish that they were Rajagopala Iyengar's students.

In these days of people coveting honour, accolades and recognition, we salute these two great souls who served the society with humility without aspiring for any recognition.

Father as seen by me…

Sosale Mohana

Sosale Mohana followed his father's footsteps as a teacher. He has taught Mathematics for over fifty years across High School and Junior College levels across three countries in three continents: India, Kenya and the United Kingdom.

This compilation is his tribute to two outstanding members of his Sosale clan.